United Nations S/PV.5522

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5522nd meeting

Wednesday, 13 September 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Makayat-Safouesse
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Peru	Mr. Pereyra Plasencia
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/707)

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06-51929 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/707)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Finland, Serbia and Ukraine in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Joachim Rücker, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Rücker to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/707, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I shall now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker.

Mr. Rücker: I am honoured to have this opportunity to address the Security Council and grateful to you, Sir, and to the members of the Council for the invitation. I took up my new responsibilities only a few days ago, but have been Deputy Special Representative for the last year and a half, so I am not new to Kosovo.

I welcome the presence here of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr Agim Çeku. Attendance by the head of the Kosovo Government has become a regular feature at these meetings, which is right and fair since we are discussing the future of the people of that territory.

The status process dominates the political agenda in Kosovo at the moment and will continue to do so until Kosovo's final status is determined. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) considers it a priority to support the Special Envoy and his Office in the pursuit of their delicate and difficult task, while acknowledging that UNMIK itself does not have a role in the determination of Kosovo's final status. The general feeling in Kosovo now is that a new phase of Kosovo's history is about to begin. That makes the majority of the people hopeful — but also nervous, since the outcome is still uncertain. Although progress continues to be made, and although UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) continue to work together to improve governance in Kosovo, in the background of all activity now is that uncertainty about the future. One idea I would like to leave the Council with today is that Kosovo needs to be rid of that uncertainty, and to move on.

It is encouraging for the future of Kosovo that the status negotiations on the Pristina side have been conducted by a unity team led by President Sejdiu. Opposition leaders in that process have achieved a difficult balance between solidarity within the unity

team and a critical domestic stance towards the performance of the Government, as is normal in democracies. Along with the status process, there is still the need to provide good government and public services to the people of Kosovo. Under the energetic leadership of Prime Minister Çeku the pace has remained at the rate reported in our last presentation, in June.

The standards programme has received even greater attention since the Contact Group presented the Government, on 9 June, with a list of 13 priorities, drawn largely from the results of the 30 April UNMIK technical assessment on standards implementation. The list presented to the Government by the Contact Group identified key areas, mainly with regard to the protection of minorities and community rights — for example, new laws on cultural heritage, languages and so forth. The PISG, with help from UNMIK, have devoted much attention to meeting the targets set by the Contact Group. The priorities have by now been mostly achieved. With regard to the remaining priorities, they are on track and progress is being made. I thank the Contact Group for that contribution to the standards process, which has undoubtedly helped to maintain the momentum on implementation.

At the same time, the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan, drafted in 2004, was in need of revision to reflect changing realities. Last month, therefore, the Government adopted an Action Plan to implement its European partnership. That Action Plan now forms the basis of both European integration and standards work, and so unites two processes that have the common objective of achieving social and economic progress.

One area of particular concern to us is the situation in northern Kosovo. In May, several highly publicized security incidents occurred that — without any evidence — were portrayed by some Kosovo Serb leaders and Serbian authorities as inter-ethnic attacks. Those incidents were used by the municipalities north of the river Ibar to sever all cooperation with the Pristina authorities. That boycott continues, although the northern municipalities continue to cooperate with UNMIK. Meanwhile, UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) have substantially expanded and enhanced their security presence north of the river Ibar.

Still, incidents of violent crime occur, such as the grenade explosion in a Serb bar in northern Mitrovica and the subsequent violent response against non-Serb passers-by. For several days we had to close the main bridge linking the two sides of the town, but we have now started to reopen the crossing as the situation has become more stable. Violent crimes are to be deplored wherever they occur, and prosecuted with the full force of the law. But frequent attempts to portray Kosovo as a place where non-Albanians, in particular the Kosovo Serbs, are under constant attack and are daily victims of ethnic crimes are completely unjustified. They do not reflect the reality on the ground.

Serbs and Albanians will have to live together in Kosovo whatever the outcome of the status discussions. We all know that will not be easy. But, in fact, we see many encouraging examples in Kosovo where people are already finding practical solutions to their common problems and are laying the foundations for a multi-ethnic Kosovo. But, obviously, those are not the cases that attract attention and publicity.

In that context, I strongly support the initiative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, who intends to launch, in October, a systematic, structured approach to promote reconciliation.

Belgrade retains a powerful influence over the attitudes of the Kosovo Serbs. I would wish to get a clear signal from the Belgrade authorities to the Kosovo Serbs that their future is in Kosovo if they wish it, that they have no reason to leave and that they should find ways to cooperate with the elected Kosovo authorities. A valuable part of that signal would be the withdrawal of the directive that Serbs in the public service must either leave the PISG payroll or else lose the extra salaries and other benefits paid by Belgrade. I am ready to work with Belgrade to build a Kosovo where neighbours with such a troubled past can finally find a common future.

The PISG has continued its outreach campaign, and Government ministers continue to seek out non-Albanian audiences and to reassure them. But that campaign has not always been successful in gaining trust. For example, Serbs in the enclave of Velika Hoča recently refused to meet the Prime Minister. Certainly, the Kosovo Government has a responsibility to gain the trust of all of its citizens. But if there is no wish even for dialogue from its interlocutors, then its power to succeed is somewhat limited.

Yes, the Kosovo Serbs are in a difficult situation. They fear for their future and they do not know whom they can trust. They have been barred for over two and a half years from participating actively in the work of the Kosovo Assembly or the Government. But isolation is not the answer to their problems; integration is.

The security situation has remained stable, although I would not deny that there continue to be risks — for example, incidents such as the ones I mentioned, which might themselves be relatively insignificant but which might escalate. In such an environment, security policy is always a priority. I am glad to acknowledge the continuing good cooperation between the leadership of UNMIK and KFOR.

I spoke earlier about the implementation of standards and the PISG's growing commitment to serving the public. Two areas that need particular attention are justice and the economy. We noted in June the need to build a justice system that can command the faith of the population and business, whatever community they come from. Efforts to reappoint all judges and prosecutors on the basis of a reassessment of their credentials should contribute to an improvement and should begin soon. But building an efficient and impartial justice system for Kosovo is a task that will take some time.

As for the economy, the legal and institutional framework for a functioning market economy is largely in place. However, increased private sector development is necessary to extricate Kosovo's economy out of a vicious circle of low growth, unemployment and a large trade imbalance. There are encouraging signs in that respect. Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Kosovo has been projected at some 3 per cent. Given the shrinking public sector and diminishing donor input, such a performance is due to an expansion of the private sector. Moreover, privatization has continued at an accelerated pace. Overall, Kosovo's economic growth will depend on investment-led development of key economic sectors, and clarification of Kosovo's status would remove certain complications that currently affect long-term investment decisions.

We in UNMIK are well aware that we retain our mandate under resolution 1244 (1999) for as long as the Council decides. At the same time, against the background of the status process, we have to start planning for the end of the mandate. We have continued to follow the thinking of the Contact Group on the likely shape and powers of the international presence which will follow us, and we have maintained a dialogue with international partners on the transition from UNMIK to that future presence. There is now in Pristina a European Union planning team looking at future involvement in the police and justice sectors, and a separate team advising Brussels on the composition of the future international civilian office. We have regular contacts and discussions with both those teams, and we also have a Steering Group which brings together international actors with an interest or role in the transition process. We plan to include other interested parties in the discussions at various levels, including the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, which also need to prepare for the time of transition which lies ahead.

The devolution of UNMIK's powers and activities will in itself be a major exercise, and we are planning for that too. We need to do this even though we have no timetable for the end of UNMIK's mandate under resolution 1244 (1999), in order to be ready to move forward quickly and efficiently when the time comes.

As I said earlier, UNMIK will discharge its responsibilities as long as it has them. But I would like to reiterate that, for the sake of the people of Kosovo and their future, the current period of uncertainty needs to be brought to an end as soon as possible. Yes, there will be tensions and difficulties in the months ahead, and we can expect emotions occasionally to spill over when something so vital to people's interests is being determined. But I believe that the tensions and difficulties arising from any delay in this process would be even greater. Delay will not bring reconciliation. Delay will not lead to economic recovery. Delay will only prolong the tensions existing in Kosovo society, which will feed frustration and make the new start, when it does come, even harder to get right.

I look forward to serving as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo at a historic time. I expect to be the last person to perform that function. In any case, I am well aware that the task is not easy. But we must get it right, and I am absolutely convinced that together we can get it right if the current momentum in the status process is kept up.

06-51929

Momentum is key. Let me conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for your continued support in this very crucial phase of our mission.

The President: I thank Mr. Rücker for his briefing.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): It gives me great pleasure to be able to address the Council and to pay my respects to this body of the world Organization.

First and foremost, I wish to emphasize the unique significance of the Security Council as a guarantor upholding the universal principles of international law and the entire world order. This is even more important if we keep in mind the imperative of bringing about peace and stability in, and developing the future of, both Kosovo and Metohija and the region of South-Eastern Europe.

The Republic of Serbia resolutely maintains that upholding and promoting peace and stability in the Western Balkans will be possible only through strict observance of international principles. These include, first and foremost, the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of democratic States.

We wish in particular to reiterate the fact that Serbia is fully determined to assume its share of responsibility in the process of working towards a successful resolution of the Kosovo and Metohija issue, in accordance with international law and in conformity with universal democratic values. We are addressing the Security Council with full confidence that it will make an instrumental contribution in line with its previously adopted documents, in particular with resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, which reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

We firmly believe that achieving a durable solution to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija will be possible only through systematic, responsible and orderly negotiations, without imposed deadlines that can only result in additional pressure. Otherwise, new complications may arise with unforeseeable consequences — the inevitable result of any departure from the universal principles embraced by the international community. Impatience and haste cannot contribute to a sustainable solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija or to peace and stability in the region.

May I remind the Council that three months ago, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported on the progress made in all areas, including security. On that very day, a Serbian returnee from Klina, Dragan Popovic, was brutally murdered. The perpetrators were never identified. This was taken as yet another ominous message to the Serb community, especially to the returnees. Regrettably, that reality speaks for itself.

Since that meeting of the Security Council, 51 small- and large-scale incidents have occurred, involving assaults against the lives and property of Serbs. However, from October 2005, when it was decided that the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo would begin, to 1 September 2006, there were 260 incidents.

In the evening of 26 August this year, a 16-year-old Albanian slowly walked across the bridge between South and North Mitrovica. He threw a bomb at a nearby Serbian coffee shop packed with people and calmly walked away. There is no doubt that this act of violence was political and that it targeted Serbs. Therefore, it was not aimed at a specific person who happened to be a Serb, but at Serbs as legitimate targets.

It is with the deepest regret that we must state that that terrorist attack against the Serbs occurred subsequent to a statement to the effect that the Serbs as a nation were guilty — a statement that was expressly made in front of the Serbian negotiating team in Vienna and several other witnesses by a person one would never expect to do so, especially considering the high office he holds.

That unfortunate statement was followed by a refusal to offer an apology to the Serbian people for having made such a harsh accusation. At the same time, this has been the only argument, if it is an argument at all, that has been presented in favour of Kosovo and Metohija's independence so far.

The Serbian negotiating team is working actively on protection of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, mainly through decentralization. Regarding the issue of future status, its main arguments are based on the universality of

international law and the inviolability of borders. That presumes that it is inadmissible to rob the internationally recognized State of Serbia of 15 per cent of its territory in order to create a second Albanian State in the region. It is thus clear why the Albanian side has not engaged in meaningful negotiations. The negotiations have so far been conducted in such a casual manner that minutes were not kept nor were rules of procedure set until the Serbian side explicitly requested that these things be done.

On 28 March this year, there was yet another incident on the same bridge in the course of which a 19-year-old man, Milisav Ilincic, was stabbed. The international public prosecutor for the Kosovska Mitrovica district, Paul Flynn, terminated the investigation against two Albanians suspected of attempted murder, although one of them had confessed to having stabbed Ilincic.

Taking into account that event and many other incidents, as well as the incomprehensible fact that ever since UNMIK assumed responsibility for peace and security in Kosovo and Metohija in 1999, very few cases involving the murder or assault of Serbs have been tried in court, it would appear that the survival of the remaining Serbs, from the Albanians' point of view, stands in the way of their political and ideological goals. Hence, the UNMIK tactic of avoiding conflicts with militant Albanians simply means turning a blind eye to reality.

As hard to believe as it is, everything I have mentioned leads to the conclusion that fear of powerful and violent Albanians and their threats of revenge is the very factor that is undermining international law and justice.

Let me remind members that in Kosovo and Metohija people may get killed just for speaking a Slavic language resembling Serbian, as in the case of a Bulgarian in Pristina who lost his life. Ethnic identity becomes a license to kill. But the real situation is even worse. In a terrorist bomb attack I referred to earlier, on 26 August, a few non-Serbs — foreign nationals — were also injured. One of them happened to be an international police officer. They were attacked just for being present in a Serb-owned establishment.

As for religious monuments, cultural heritage and religious freedoms, on the one hand there is an emphasis on legislating those matters, and we welcome that. On the other hand, in practice, religious shrines are being desecrated and looted. As one of many examples, in a church in the Serbian village of Mogila, in the vicinity of Gnjilane, there are still some Christian icons on the church walls with the eyes of the saints gouged out by Albanian extremists in the campaign of ethnic cleansing of March 2004 against the remaining Serbs and other non-Albanians. The Provisional Institutions have never undertaken to protect those religious shrines or to ease the fears of the believers who pray in that church and look at the desecrated icons as they contemplate whether they should remain in their homeland.

Furthermore, the international community has every right to demand that the Kosovo Institutions adopt laws against so-called general discrimination. However, the mere adoption of such laws is not a solution to the problem. The true leaders of Kosovo society are the individuals of undisputed authority within their communities: the clan leaders. The decisions are made by them, not by the judiciary. That was said even by Mr. Kai Eide in his report (S/2005/635, annex). In Kosovo, justice is being taken into people's own hands; tribal laws and blood feuds still rule there, unfortunately. One cannot fight that just by promulgating laws against discrimination. What is needed are true implementation and true monitoring.

Securing the safety of public transport has always been a priority — at least a declared one — and is one of the 13 recommendations of the Contact Group. In practice, there are so-called death roads, a colloquial expression used by KFOR and UNMIK officers to refer to the roads connecting the Serbian settlement Strpce — a very distant Serbian enclave in Kosovo territory — to other Serbian regions. So far, 12 terrorist attacks against Serbs have been conducted there.

Only a few hours before the public transport competencies were to be transferred from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, several Albanians stoned a bus carrying Serbian children home from a field trip. The incident took place in the village of Zabari, outside Kosovska Mitrovica, on 30 August 2006. Bus windows were broken, but fortunately there were no casualties. UNMIK issued a statement denying that the police officers escorting the bus had witnessed the incident — not denying, however, that it had taken place. Sadly enough, the children will remember their ordeal, whether anyone saw it or not, whether anyone chose to

see anything or not, or whether a statement on the incident was issued at all.

I wish to recall that Ambassador Kai Eide, in his comprehensive review of the situation in Kosovo, qualified the process of establishing the future status of Kosovo and the continuance of standards implementation as the only way towards any progress. Ambassador Eide also emphasized other very important and essential issues. Regrettably, so far there have been no serious signs whatsoever that anyone is willing to recognize at least some among those absolutely adequate and correct recommendations. On the other hand, unfortunately, the flexible attitude of our negotiating team failed to be reciprocated by the Albanian negotiating team, which maintained a rigid and uncompromising attitude: independence at any cost.

With regard to the completion of the reconstruction and compensation programme in the wake of ethnic cleansing against the Serbs in March 2004, it is important to underline the fact that security is the top issue and the top priority that has to be dealt with.

The lack of progress in the return of the displaced and exiled population, which has been recognized, is particularly worrisome. Without getting into details about the methodologies that some organizations apply to record the returnees, we call attention to the fact that even the most optimistic of those records indicate a maximum of 5 per cent of returnees. The real numbers do not exceed 2 per cent. I also wish to point out that the return of the internally displaced persons can be facilitated and made possible through genuine commitment and joint efforts in the field.

The Kosovo PISG should publicly support the submission of property claims to the Kosovo Property Agency regarding restitution of agricultural and commercial property. However, a genuine wish to resolve the issue is lacking. The Kosovo Property Agency has started receiving claims, but without any media coverage or outreach campaign. The fact that the Agency has still not obtained the funds to process the claims clearly demonstrates that its activities are considered peripheral by the PISG.

It is not a secret that large-scale organized crime, as well as crime in general, including trafficking in human beings and corruption, flourish in Kosovo and Metohija. The trade in and smuggling of drugs and arms continue unhindered before the very eyes of the representatives of the international community, including police and the military. There is no need to stress yet again that Serbia, as a State of which Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part, is more than open to any specialized police and investigative activity which will assist in the eradication of trafficking in human beings and narcotics in the province, because this is not just Kosovo's problem and not just Serbia's problem: it is a European and world problem.

The situation and developments in Kosovo and Metohija should be assessed realistically and responsibly. Here, "realistically" means the point of view of international law and historical and political aspects. "Responsibly" is probably of paramount importance; it presumes that the consequences of our present actions should be anticipated for two, five, 10 or even more years in the future. To force a premature solution would come at a great cost to the region, the province and the international community, which, instead of reaching a sustainable solution, would have to deal with an even more difficult and complex situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

A precipitous solution would not solve the issue, but would be a precedent opening up a Pandora's box, which should be avoided at any cost. It is truly hard to believe that anyone would want to take that responsibility just to meet a certain deadline. I emphasize that patience and patience alone, with eyes wide open to reality and the future, can bring about a true compromise solution to the Kosovo and Metohija issue.

An imposed solution will not be conducive to the resolution of the problem of Kosovo and Metohija. It is quite clear that it is self-deception to believe that Kosovo and Metohija is going to be a special and unique case. The point is that any imposed solution will inevitably generate unforeseeable and fatal consequences.

I would like to share that feeling of responsibility. Together with the leaders in my Government and with my country, I wish to say to the Council, loud and clear, that a sustainable, compromise solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija can be reached only if artificial deadlines — and the philosophy of Kosovo as a special case — are set aside.

The Serbian side therefore believes that the settlement of the Kosovo and Metohija problem lies in

the implementation of the principles and concrete solutions based on the platform of the Serbian negotiating team regarding the future status of Kosovo and Metohija. In the long run, that is the only way ahead towards the proper resolution of the dire situation in the province. The international community ought to support this, and show by its deeds that it is in favour of a stable and safe region. That can be achieved only by taking a step towards establishing the rule of law, by bringing the criminals and terrorists to justice and punishing them and by ensuring security and all the other preconditions for a normal life.

Furthermore, the necessary political steps should be taken to persuade the Albanian side to give up extreme, exclusive demands and to embrace a rational compromise solution — namely, substantial autonomy with comprehensive competencies. At the same time, the Albanians will gain the Serbs as strategic partners for the future. Without the Serbs, Albanians will not go far, and they should not routinely reject the reasonable and generous offers from our side. Despite the evident difficulties, there is still enough scope for an agreement, based on democratic principles and European standards.

The President: I will now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We would like to thank Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement. We also welcome the presence among us this morning of the Prime Minister of Kosovo.

We congratulate the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, and thank him for his briefing today. My delegation pledges its support and cooperation to him and wishes him a successful tenure of office. We are also grateful to the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his dedicated service, diplomatic skill and tireless efforts at the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) during the past two years.

Tanzania is encouraged by the stage reached in the future status process for Kosovo. We reaffirm our confidence in the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, and commend him for conducting the high-level meeting in Vienna on 24 July bringing together the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo. The fact that such high-power delegations were able to meet is in itself a remarkable achievement, despite the persisting differences. We encourage them to persevere on the path of dialogue to determine the future status of Kosovo.

While acknowledging the distance between their stated positions on substantial autonomy versus full independence, we urge them nonetheless to show more flexibility and compromise so as to narrow down their differences and find common ground, in the interests of a peaceful and sustainable solution to the status of Kosovo.

My delegation is pleased to note the progress made on the implementation of standards by the Kosovo authorities and the adoption of the European Partnership Action Plan, which replaces the 2004 Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan. This is yet another display of the commitment of the Government of Kosovo to the political process. We encourage it to continue with standards implementation in parallel with the talks on the future status. The implementation adds confidence and momentum to the talks.

We have also noted the shift of the decentralization process from Pristina to the future status process. This change should bring a fresh impetus to the decentralization issue, which is also crucial to the whole peace process in Kosovo.

The question of the inclusion of the Serb minority in both the future status talks and the Kosovo Institutions remains a stumbling block to a true multi-ethnic, multicultural society. It is imperative that the Serb minority fully participate in both. We reiterate our call to the Republic of Serbia to encourage it to take part in the process and to the Kosovo leadership to step up its effort to reach out to the minority groups. Both sides should promote initiatives that will enhance mutual trust, tolerance and coexistence.

In the same vein, efforts should also be geared towards creating an environment more favourable for returnees. In this regard, we welcome the signing, in Pristina on 6 June by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Belgrade and Pristina representatives, of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns, which had an immediate impact on some returnees. However, many more are still reluctant to return, owing to economic and security factors. We appeal to donors and to the international

community as a whole to provide the required funding to encourage the voluntary smooth return and reintegration of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, including restitution and compensation relating to property claims.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/707) states that it remains stable but fragile. We commend KFOR, UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service for taking measures to enhance security throughout Kosovo. However, we are concerned about incidents that have led to breaches of security, especially those targeting individuals and religious sites. The reported increased vandalism against Serbian Orthodox churches is deplorable and must be stopped forthwith. We support the efforts of the Kosovo police to increase security at such sites.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to UNMIK, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations family in Kosovo and other funding organizations for their coordinated efforts and their contribution to the peace process in Kosovo.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's Security Council meeting of the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, as well as of the Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, and the delegation accompanying him.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), as well as of the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, regarding the situation in Kosovo, Republic of Serbia. The attainment of concrete, effective progress in the work on standards remains one of the factors determining the pace and productiveness of the status dialogue.

At the ministerial meeting of the Group of Eight in Moscow, it was emphasized in particular that Kosovo must remain multi-ethnic. The leadership of the province must give particular attention to the implementation of standards defined by the international community with respect to ethnic minorities. Unfortunately, despite some positive steps, achievements in this area cannot be described as significant, and the activities of the Provisional Institutions in Kosovo remain insufficient and inconsistent.

Above all, it is also too early to say that the necessary guarantees of the rights and security of minority representatives, particularly of the Serbs, are in place. We are seriously concerned that the number of ethnically motivated crimes has again skyrocketed in the province, as the report makes clear. The unfortunate situation in that regard was highlighted by the recent incident in northern Mitrovica, where a grenade was thrown into a Serbian café. Crimes against the Serbian ethnic minority are often still not fully investigated and their perpetrators go unpunished. To question the fact that the overwhelming majority of those crimes are ethnically motivated is to disregard facts with which we are all familiar.

The situation with regard to freedom of movement is equally dire. Minorities remain fearful and feel that the roads remain unsafe. The problems of decentralization and the protection of the religious and cultural heritage of minorities are also far from resolved. Like the Secretary-General, we strongly condemn the increasing incidence of vandalism of Serbian Orthodox religious shrines in Kosovo. The situation demands heightened accountability in that regard on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other European organizations.

The situation with regard to the return of refugees and communities is also unsatisfactory, as borne out, inter alia, by the figures provided in the report. In that context, we welcome the agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina, which represent a step in the right direction. However, if we are to redress the situation, we need primarily concrete and, above all, financial measures to improve living conditions in the province and to remove obstacles to the returns process.

We understand the Secretary-General's concern over the severing by the northern municipalities of relations with the provisional authorities. We call for the establishment of independent security mechanisms. We support the appeal made in the report to all parties to refrain from making provocative accusations and to strive to find a constructive solution to those issues.

However, the non-participation by the Kosovo Serbs in the activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government also demonstrates just how far Kosovo remains from completing the main task of creating a multi-ethnic and democratic society. Among minorities, the level of trust in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government remains very low. The majority community must create a climate that encourages the minorities, the Kosovo Serbs in particular, to cooperate with the provincial authorities and to participate in all spheres of life in Kosovo. We consider attempts to blame Belgrade for the non-participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to be wrong-headed.

We urge the leaders of the province vigorously to intensify their efforts to register real and sustainable progress in the implementation of standards, above all those that are of crucial importance to ensuring the Kosovo's multi-ethnic character. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that we must not lose sight of the fact that all standards without exception are of great importance to the future of Kosovo and that further progress in implementing other standards is just as essential. We hope that the Contact Group will carefully monitor implementation of standards by the provincial leaders.

Of course, the Serbian side has to play its part here, too. The attainment of concrete and effective progress in standards implementation is one of the determining factors impacting on the pace and productivity of the negotiating process to determine the future status of Kosovo. Only a sustainable qualitative redressing of the standards situation can lay the foundation for its productive advancement through the mediation of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, to find a balanced, negotiated compromise between Belgrade and Pristina.

Like the Secretary-General, we welcome the onset of a new phase in the Kosovo settlement — the beginning of a political dialogue at the highest level on status affairs. Of course, it would be difficult to hope for much more from the first high-level meeting, at which a very natural exchange of claims took place. Nevertheless, the option proposed by Belgrade for broad or substantial autonomy for Kosovo is open-ended; in other words, it can be adjusted over the course of time. It offers a basis for negotiations that would permit a smooth and gradual transition to the issue of the province's status. That particular approach is consistent with the task of strengthening the stability of the Balkans.

The Secretary-General is right to note the need for the parties to the talks to show greater flexibility and a spirit of compromise. They must find points of convergence and a long-term, mutually acceptable solution. In that regard, the international community's support remains a crucial factor for progress. The positions of the countries of the region and of other interested European States and participants in the Kosovo Force must be taken into account. It is also important to take into consideration the situation with regard to the Serbian enclaves in the northern part of the province, whose situation demonstrates just how long it will take even to establish the most basic cooperation between the parties.

In any event, any decision on the future status of the province must be a universal one. Only a negotiated decision on Kosovo, and not one that is imposed and one-sided or that will set a negative precedent in the context of international crisis settlement, can be supported by the Security Council. It is already clear that even an optimal scenario for genuine and lasting results on standards implementation and for the drafting of solutions by the parties to the status talks will take quite some time to evolve. In that connection, we deem it counterproductive to establish any arbitrary time frames.

A negotiated solution on the future status of Kosovo is a priority for Russia. That is the gist of the Contact Group's statement following the Vienna summit negotiations, which clearly refers to making progress towards a decision on the basis of compromise.

Our delegation associates itself with the Secretary-General's words of gratitude to the former head of UNMIK, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, and welcomes the appointment of Mr. Rücker as Special Representative for Kosovo. We hope that, under his guidance, UNMIK will strictly abide by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), as well as the guidelines of the Contact Group and the ministerial declaration it issued in London on 31 January.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): I wish to congratulate Ambassador Joachim Rücker on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General

and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and also add my word of appreciation for his briefing. As the former Deputy Special Representative and head of the Economic Reconstruction Programme of UNMIK, Ambassador Rücker no doubt has the requisite experience to help the people of Kosovo along the path towards a more peaceful, united and stable future.

UNMIK remains, as ever, an indispensable bridge to peaceful coexistence and reconciliation between the Kosovo Albanians and their Serbian counterparts and other minorities. We take this opportunity also to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, in laying the foundation for Kosovo's future progress.

The overall improvement in the security situation is most welcome, especially the marked reduction in inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as the strengthening of border and boundary controls.

The transfer of further competencies to the Kosovo ministries of internal affairs and justice and related initiatives are an essential part of the institutional capacity-building necessary for good governance.

At the same time, we must commend the Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, for having worked hard to ensure that the summit-level meeting between the authorities in Serbia and Kosovo took place in Vienna on 24 July. We believe that the convening of the summit was a very significant step forward, in spite of the seemingly irreconcilable differences between the parties as to whether Kosovo should emerge from the talks a fully independent country or an autonomous province within Serbia but with substantial powers of self-government.

My delegation recognizes that the question is an exceedingly complex and delicate one. Therefore we can only encourage the two sides to show flexibility in their positions and continue negotiating in good faith, in order to reach a settlement that neither glosses over the realities on the ground — not least the rights of all ethnic groups in Kosovo — nor takes for granted the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia.

In that connection, we reiterate our previous calls on the Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic minorities to take an active part in shaping the future of their homeland by participating in the Provisional Institutions.

We are also hopeful that the ongoing wide-ranging talks on matters such as the decentralization of governmental functions in Kosovo, municipal boundaries, community rights, cultural heritage and religious sites, as well as economic issues, will help bring greater clarity to the future status talks and assist the parties to weigh their options with the necessary pragmatism.

The implementation of standards is designed to help Kosovo to make a clean break with its unfortunate past and is critical to its long-term unity and stability, whatever the outcome of the final status process. It is only through a rigorous implementation of the standards, which have now been realigned with the European Partnership Action Plan, that a new culture of tolerance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, inclusiveness and mutual respect among the various ethnic groups can be fostered. The standards must be woven into the social fabric of Kosovo if they are to make the desired impact.

We therefore urge the Government of Kosovo not to relent in its efforts to implement the standards and also to reach out to the Kosovo Serbs and make them partners in the transformation of Kosovo into a gentler and kinder society. For their part, the Kosovo Serbs and the authorities in Belgrade likewise may wish to keep in mind that what matters most, ultimately, is the kind of society that Kosovo turns out to be after the dust has settled on the current political process.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his presentation, and to wish him every success in his new post at this crucial time for the future of Kosovo. In particular, he will be responsible for preparing for the transition from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the future international presence, which must be very carefully organized.

I should like also to welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, as well as that of Mr. Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo, as part of the delegation headed by Mr. Rücker.

The Permanent Representative of Finland will make a statement later on behalf of the European

Union presidency. I associate myself fully with that statement. However, I wish to touch on several points.

First, we note that the report of the Secretary-General highlights the progress that has been made with regard to the implementation of standards, in keeping with the request submitted by Council members. This is a positive development, but it must be further expanded. All of the standards must be implemented rapidly, in a concrete manner, in particular with regard to the 13 priorities identified by UNMIK and by the Contact Group with regard to the protection of minorities and the rule of law.

The efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo to build a multi-ethnic country will play an important role in defining the future status of Kosovo. Moreover, the dialogue undertaken by the provisional authorities addressing minorities, starting with the Serb minority, must be intensified.

No lasting stability will be possible in the absence of reconciliation among communities. Unacceptable acts of violence against minorities make it clear that such a reconciliation lies far ahead in the future. The perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice. However, such a necessary reconciliation will require also the Serbian authorities to participate in full in the Provisional Institutions, which is in their own interest. In that respect, we share the concerns outlined by the Secretary-General with regard to the pressure that has been brought to bear on the Kosovo Serbs to dissuade them doing so. The authorities in Belgrade must encourage such participation and not seek to impede it.

The report of the Secretary-General also underlines the increasing tension in northern Kosovo. Whatever the future status of Kosovo may be, we will have to devise realistic operational arrangements that will provide for development in northern Kosovo. Increased decentralization must preserve the identity and protect the rights of the various communities.

It is regrettable that several municipal assemblies have decided to suspend cooperation with the Provisional Institutions. Belgrade and Pristina must work to encourage local leaders to build confidence. In any case, we certainly would rule out any notion of partition.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its full support for the negotiation process that is under way under the auspices of Mr. Ahtisaari. While the positions of the parties remain divergent, as is underlined in the report of the Secretary-General, it is more pressing than ever before for the parties to become involved in a constructive manner and to show flexibility with regard to the status issue and also with regard to the constituent elements of the status.

We hope that the process will result in a negotiated settlement. In any case, it is imperative that a solution be found by the deadline that we have set, that is, by the end of 2006, both in order to assuage any feelings of impatience and to prevent any further delays in resolving a problem that threatens regional stability.

Whatever form the future status of Kosovo may take, it must be in keeping with the European architecture. From that perspective, we deem imperative progress towards achieving a multi-ethnic and democratic society. We look to Belgrade and Pristina to contribute actively in that respect.

Mr. Pereyra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his presentation of the report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 1 May to 14 August of this year. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Rücker on having taken up his new post on 1 September, and we wish him every success in his future work.

I am grateful also for the information provided us this morning by Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

The delegation of Peru indicated earlier the vital need to progress towards implementing all the standards. Whatever the final status of Kosovo may be, it must be democratic in nature. There must be respect for civil liberties; political, religious and cultural tolerance; respect for minorities; economic opportunities for all; and a regular transfer of power. The European vision for the region must take shape there.

My delegation welcomes the positive efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo to implement the standards. However, we deplore the fact that

obstacles still bar the way to achieving the progress requested by the Contact Group in a number of areas.

All the parties concerned must redouble their efforts to move forward and promote confidence among Kosovo's communities — for example, confidence in democratic institutions, the rule of law, voluntary and sustainable return, community rights, the Comprehensive Action Plan against Discrimination, respect for cultural heritage, the Working Group on Missing Persons and the proposal to ensure security for minorities.

The delegation of Peru believes that building a multi-ethnic and democratic society requires active cooperation by all the sectors involved. Without that basis, it will be very difficult to find a lasting solution of regional peace and stability, even if a definition of status is achieved.

Another aspect that my country considers essential in standards implementation is progress in building a viable economy with sufficient productive capacity to ensure the economic sustainability of democracy in Kosovo.

Peru wishes to reiterate that to move beyond this transitional phase there must be significant progress in rebuilding Kosovo's economy with a view to achieving its competitive integration into the regional arena. Recent Latin American experience clearly shows us that a competitive market economy bolsters the rule of law and the stability of political systems. That applies also to Kosovo. A production and services structure that generates opportunities for the local population is essential to reduce crime and other social ills that unfortunately affect Kosovo and have an impact beyond its borders. Even the most recent incidents in northern Kosovo can be analysed in terms of the unemployment situation.

The delegation of Peru wishes to reaffirm its support for the political process aimed at finding a negotiated solution to Kosovo's future status. We hope that the parties will not hamper the discussions to which they have committed themselves and that they will help in good faith to overcome any circumstances that might prevent them from moving forward with realism and pragmatism to achieve the well-being of the peoples that they represent.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/707) and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Rücker — whom I congratulate on his assumption of that important post — for his briefing. We also welcome Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and thank her for addressing our meeting.

We have noted that during the past few months, as a result of the joint efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, standards implementation has made significant progress in a number of priority areas. However, that progress is not sufficiently comprehensive; challenges remain, particularly in areas such as security, refugee returns, culture and ethnic integration. The majority ethnic group in Kosovo bears a major responsibility for creating a stable social environment conducive to the harmonious coexistence of ethnic groups. Other parties should also actively cooperate in that effort.

Many aspects of standards implementation have a bearing on the future status process for Kosovo. We hope that, with UNMIK's help, Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and their leaders can overcome these difficulties and implement the standards in a comprehensive and effective manner.

Since the launching of the future status process for Kosovo at the end of last year, the Serbian Government and Kosovo authorities, with the good offices and coordination provided by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Ahtisaari, have held many rounds of direct talks. The first high-level meeting was held in July this year. That kind of dialogue has enabled the two parties to fully understand each other's positions and to achieve some common understanding; thus it is essential in order to maintain the momentum of cooperation and the search for a sustainable solution. China welcomes the continuation of this dialogue and supports efforts to reach a settlement acceptable to both parties through peaceful negotiations.

The Kosovo issue concerns the stability and prosperity of the Balkans and the surrounding areas. In order to resolve that issue, it is necessary to hear the views of all the parties. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is an important principle of

international law. China has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the Balkans.

We have always believed that, in order to find an appropriate and comprehensive solution to the Kosovo issue, we must effectively implement the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, encourage both parties and help them to reach a compromise through consultations and negotiations. We hope that the parties will continue to move the political process forward with a view to resolving the Kosovo issue in a spirit of sincerity and pragmatism.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I should like to add my voice to those of others in the Chamber today welcoming the recently appointed United Nations Special Representative, Mr. Rücker. We are very lucky to have someone of his experience and knowledge in Kosovo appointed by the Secretary-General. We look forward to working very closely with him, as we did with his predecessor. I would like to associate the United Kingdom with all the tributes that have been paid today to Mr. Jessen-Petersen. I would also like to welcome back to the Council Prime Minister Agim Çeku and Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic.

The United Kingdom also associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The United Kingdom is pleased to see from the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2006/707) that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Çeku, standards implementation in Kosovo continues across the board. I have listened very carefully to what people have said in the Council today, and I think we all agree that substantial progress has been made on a number of key issues important to Kosovo's minority communities. In that connection, I would like to commend to colleagues the note circulated to the Council today by Prime Minister Çeku, which gives some more detail about what has been achieved.

I think we are also all agreed that the progress that has been achieved needs to continue and to be accelerated. Neither the international community nor the Provisional Institutions can be complacent or take continued implementation of standards for granted. Progress must continue, and sustained outreach to Kosovo's communities is required to explain the importance of, and obtain support for, the meaningful implementation of standards in Kosovo. That, above all, is something that must fall to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government themselves; it is not something that the international community can do for them.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, systematic attention is required across the board if the momentum reported today is to be maintained. Part of the role of the Council is to encourage all the parties to work towards that goal. The Contact Group sought to complement the effort by putting forward, in coordination with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), 13 clear and achievable priority areas for early implementation. The United Kingdom is encouraged that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have fully completed six of these and that most of the others are on schedule. But partial implementation is not enough. We hope that no effort will be spared to implement the remaining priorities in the coming weeks. In particular, we look to the Kosovo Assembly to finalize the adoption of laws on languages and cultural heritage as soon as possible.

A number of challenges lie ahead for the people of Kosovo. We heard today from Ms. Raskovic-Ivic and from the Russian Permanent Representative about acts of violence against Kosovo Serbs. I would like to make it clear that the United Kingdom condemns such acts of violence. They are totally unacceptable, and we look to the Pristina authorities to find and try the perpetrators and to help create conditions that prevent such attacks from occurring. But I would also like to make it clear that the attacks, however deplorable, do not in themselves alter the direction of travel in which Kosovo is going.

I note from what Mr. Rücker said that UNMIK and KFOR have expanded their presence north of the Ibar. That is important, and we welcome that contribution from both organizations. But it is disappointing that there is a need for them to do so. We call on all sides, including the Kosovo Serbs, to refrain from causing or exacerbating tensions. We are disappointed that events there were used as an excuse to break off dialogue. I would like to associate the United Kingdom very firmly with what Mr. Rücker said about integration, not isolation, being the way forward for the Kosovo Serb community.

In that connection, I once again appeal to Belgrade to encourage cooperation between the

Kosovo Serbs and the Pristina authorities. When the Council last met to address the issue of Kosovo, a number of us issued that appeal. It is disappointing that we have to reiterate it today. I am thinking, in particular, of the edict issued by the Serbian Coordination Centre to encourage Kosovo Serb communities to withdraw from health and educational institutions. It is hard to see how that is in the interests of those communities. It is certainly not in the interests of Kosovo's future.

This meeting was supposed to be focused on standards, but a number of other speakers have touched on status. I would therefore like to do so. The standards process in Kosovo needs to be seen in the context of support for the status process, currently led by Martti Ahtisaari. I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's fullest support the United Nations Special Envoy and for his approach to the status process. I think that it is disappointing again that in all of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic's statement today there was no mention of Mr. Ahtisaari, no mention of his work and no mention of the duty of all of us to cooperate with him to the best of our ability and the extent possible.

I would like to state that the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to the principles set out in the 31 January ministerial Contact Group statement, including the target of agreement by the end of 2006, and to the Contact Group guiding principles.

Independence is an option for Kosovo — some would say that it is the only option that will bring lasting peace and security to the region. At the same time, it is for those who seek that outcome to give practical reassurance to the minority that the multi-ethnic Kosovo to which many speakers have referred today will become a reality and can take its proper place in Europe. We will spare no effort, as the United Kingdom, to work towards a settlement that provides long-term security and stability for the Balkans region as it moves along this path. The nature of the Kosovo situation makes this a unique and distinct political process. Its outcome will necessarily require unique and distinct solutions.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): I would like at the outset to join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Joachim Rücker for his comprehensive presentation. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate him on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Kosovo is now at a crucial juncture, and completing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has taken on even greater importance. Japan looks forward to the leadership and efforts of Mr. Rücker in that regard. I would also like to extend our appreciation to Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement, and to welcome the presence in the Council Chamber of Prime Minister Çeku of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo.

Much attention is currently being given to the status talks. In that connection, the Government of Japan would like to express its continuous support for the efforts of Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. Japan recognizes the importance of the so-called bottom-up approach, which includes efforts to take up status-neutral issues. This approach will certainly contribute to confidence-building among the parties. We also fully support the initiatives undertaken by the Contact Group to promote the status process. Reaching an agreement will be no easy task. However, we sincerely call upon all relevant parties to engage in the process in a flexible and constructive manner with a view to finding a mutually acceptable formula. From that point of view, we particularly welcome the holding of high-level direct talks in Vienna on 24 July, and we hope that that will be the starting point for the acceleration of the process.

The implementation of the standards for Kosovo is as important a challenge as the final status issue. In the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), concrete progress was reported on those priority areas set by the Contact Group in June this year. We welcome this progress and encourage the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Çeku, to continue their active and determined efforts towards the implementation of the standards.

We must admit, however, to a certain degree of concern regarding the implementation of the standards. Apart from positive signs in many of the standards, a gap in the level of implementation among the standards has been shown to exist. The question of the investigation and prosecution of cases relating to the March 2004 riots is one example of the issues which should be addressed immediately. We stress that point because we believe that it is essential to improve the

credibility of the judicial system in order to establish a stable, democratic and inclusive society.

Increasing outreach to minority communities by Kosovo leaders is also essential in order to facilitate the status process. The implementation of the standards is an indispensable condition for the building of a democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. Thus, steady implementation is required, regardless of the final status.

I would also like to mention one other, related, matter: the question of the participation of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's institutions. The Government of Japan expresses its concern about the cessation of contacts with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government by three municipalities in northern Kosovo. We urge those municipalities to resume their contacts with the Provisional Institutions immediately. In addition, I would like to note our serious concern about the measures taken by Serbian authorities which discourage the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions, and our support for the report of the Secretary-General in calling on the Belgrade authorities to remove all impediments of that kind.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to add a final comment. Since the tension on the ground continues to heighten as the status process advances, I would like to express our sincere wish for all leaders of Serbia and Kosovo to reaffirm their determination to resolve the issue by peaceful means only, and for all the people in the region to calmly support the development of the status process.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Rücker for his briefing. We wish him every success in his responsible mission. On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to welcome the participation of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and the presence of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Mr. Çeku, at this meeting.

The process of determining future status, launched in October last year, is moving ahead. In this context, we look forward to the upcoming consultations with Mr. Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process, which Slovakia fully supports. In that connection, we continue to believe that the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is still vital and instrumental to peace and the stable future of the region.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later at this meeting by the Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. That is why I will limit myself to the following points.

First of all, we thank the Secretary-General for his evaluation of the situation in Kosovo, contained in his latest report. We note with satisfaction the high-level participation of both sides in the political process to determine the future status of Kosovo, but we also share the disappointment of the Secretary-General that little common ground has been identified in that regard. We support the Secretary-General's appeal to the parties to demonstrate much more flexibility and generosity and to engage in the talks in the spirit of compromise, as it is their responsibility to do.

Secondly, we note with satisfaction the commitment with which Prime Minister Çeku and the Government of Kosovo have addressed the crucial issue of standards implementation. We share the Secretary-General's call upon Pristina to ensure that those efforts are maintained and that they are sustainable, and we hope soon to see the tangible results of the implementation of legislative measures adopted by the Kosovo Assembly. We wish to emphasize here that standards implementation is equally essential to the European perspective of the province. In that regard, we must make sure that there is no semblance of double standards. That is a fundamental precondition for national reconciliation and a determining factor in the period after the identification of the future status of Kosovo. Therefore, we also continue to believe that standards implementation still deserve a thorough-paced overview and attention from UNMIK and the Council, with special attention to the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group in June.

Thirdly, we share the concerns mentioned in the report regarding the situation in the northern part of Kosovo province, and especially the increasing number of incidents of violence targeting people and religious sites. We align ourselves with the strong condemnation by the Secretary-General, especially of violence of an inter-ethnic nature, and we appeal to the Kosovo institutions to address the security issue as a matter of the highest priority. No impunity should be tolerated,

and we reiterate here the need for a thorough investigation and the bringing to justice of all perpetrators. That is an important element for peaceful coexistence and confidence-building between all communities living in Kosovo. We also believe that the international community must retain its presence in the north of Kosovo after the status determination as a vital aspect of the issue of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, especially those belonging to the Serbian national minority.

We welcome the signing of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns by both sides, and we note with appreciation its immediate positive impact resulting in the return of more than 70 Serbian families. Nevertheless, we share the report's observation that the number of minority returnees is not satisfactory, although it is the number by which the project of creating the desired multi-ethnic Kosovo will be measured in real life.

Fourthly, we would like to join other speakers in calling on Belgrade to encourage the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the future status process, as well as the engagement of Kosovo Serbs in the political life of Kosovo, in order to influence the processes that will be decisive for their own future. We also call on Belgrade and Pristina to allow Kosovo Serbs to exercise their rights in a way that will contribute to the positive atmosphere of the negotiating process, as well as to the stabilization of the region.

In that regard, we would like to encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue its efforts and to undertake all necessary measures for building the trust of Serbs in Government institutions. The situation of the Kosovo Serbs and their trust in Kosovo's institutions will be an important factor for success in building a multi-ethnic Kosovo. We agree in that regard with Mr. Rücker that Serbs and Albanians will have to live together regardless of the final status of Kosovo and that they must learn to live together in an atmosphere of tolerance and peace in order to support the stability of the whole region.

Last but not least, I would like to repeat here that we support the need to find a lasting and sustainable settlement for the future status of Kosovo. We continue to believe that it is still important to seek a balanced settlement and compromise from both Belgrade and Pristina through direct talks and dialogue that reflect the objective concerns of all parties involved and contribute to the lasting security and stability of the region.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the excellent cooperation between UNMIK and KFOR. In that context, I would like to reassure you, Sir, that Slovakia, as a troop-contributing country to KFOR, is ready to continue in its dedication to peace, stabilization and integration processes in the Balkans.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I welcome Mr. Joachim Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo. I wish him every success in the discharge of his responsibilities. I thank him for his preparation of the technical assessment of progress in implementation of the standards for Kosovo, annexed to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We also pay tribute to the remarkable job done by his predecessor, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, during his term of office over the past two years.

We must also recognize the important role played by UNMIK, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in support of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the fight against crime and the transfer of powers to those Institutions in preparation for the implementation of a political settlement under resolution 1244 (1999).

Recent months have witnessed an acceleration in the implementation of the standards for Kosovo and in the talks between Pristina and Belgrade. The Special Representative's technical assessment of progress in implementation of the standards refers to the declaration by the Government of Kosovo that most of the 13 priorities determined by the Contact Group have been implemented. That bears witness to the importance of the standards being implemented, whatever the future status of Kosovo may be. It is our hope that the Government of Prime Minister Çeku will continue to honour its declared commitment to placing the standards on its list of priorities.

Recent months have also witnessed the first high-level meeting between the two parties, held in Vienna between the President and the Prime Minister of Serbia and the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo. The meeting was followed by three additional rounds of direct talks between the two parties. Those meetings — in which Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, the

Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo, played an important role — have highlighted the ongoing divisions between the two parties on the future status of Kosovo. They nevertheless represent an important step forward in the process of reaching a lasting and sustainable settlement.

One prerequisite for finding a sustainable solution for the future of Kosovo is the effective participation of Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians in the Government institutions and in all the activities of the State and society. They must also participate in the dialogue if it is to enjoy credibility and continuity. Both parties must encourage such participation and refrain from taking any measure to discourage or impede it. The future of Kosovo will be neither stable nor prosperous if it is not built on multi-ethnicity. That is why national consensus and reconciliation are critical to the future of a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

The people and Government of Kosovo have borne the responsibility for all communities to feel secure in their life, work and movement within Kosovo. The number of returnees to Kosovo reached around 770 persons in the first half of this year. That is not sufficient. Encouraging the return of refugees requires both financial support and tangible progress in the political process. One of the conditions for reaching a sustainable solution is for all parties to make all possible efforts to preserve the stability of the security situation in order to prevent any form of ethnic violence that targets people or religious sites, and to bring to justice those who are responsible for perpetrating such acts.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States): The United States welcomes new Special Representative Rücker to the Council. We are pleased that Mr. Rücker has been appointed by the Secretary-General to lead the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) at this critical time. Mr. Rücker has done an admirable job as the Head of UNMIK's Pillar IV, particularly in advancing the privatization of Kosovo's former State-owned enterprises. We look forward to supporting his efforts to help UNMIK build meaningful self-government in Kosovo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We also look forward to working closely with UNMIK and Kosovo's Provisional Government in furthering progress on standards implementation. While the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707) notes progress in that area, more must be done to make Kosovo a place where all communities can live freely and safely.

While we applaud Prime Minister Çeku for his Government's completion of several of the Contact Group's priority standards, ongoing efforts to complete the remaining items must be intensified, with particular attention paid to passing internationally accepted laws on languages and cultural heritage and implementing the comprehensive rental programme for housing currently administered by the Kosovo Property Agency.

We strongly condemn the 26 August incident in northern Mitrovica that resulted in injuries to several civilians. We call upon all sides to reject any form of violence, and we note the importance of bringing to justice the individual or individuals responsible for that crime and other violent incidents in Kosovo.

We also note with concern recent political developments in northern Kosovo and call upon all parties to act with restraint and in coordination with UNMIK and President Ahtisaari in seeking solutions to the longstanding tensions in the region. Belgrade must also do its part to help improve the situation in Kosovo. In particular, the Government in Serbia should take immediate steps that would support Kosovo Serb participation in local institutions, return cadastral records taken from Kosovo and rescind its directive instructing many Kosovo Serbs not to accept salaries from Kosovo's Government.

United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari continues to enjoy our full support, and we look forward to future Security Council consultations with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. It is incumbent upon both Pristina and Belgrade to enhance their cooperation with President Ahtisaari. After eight months of negotiations on technical issues, both sides must now make difficult compromises on decentralization, protection of religious and cultural heritage and community rights.

As noted by the Contact Group in January, all possible efforts should be made to achieve a negotiated settlement in the course of the year 2006. Delay on resolving Kosovo's status benefits neither side and creates further instability. Both sides must be realistic about the outcome of the status process. Kosovo must remain multi-ethnic, and the settlement must be acceptable to the people of Kosovo. Additionally, there will be no return of Kosovo to the pre-1999 situation.

no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any other, or part of another, country.

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to associate myself with the thanks addressed to Mr. Joachim Rücker for his briefing. At the same time, I would like to assure him of the support of my delegation in the exercise of his new duties as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). His commitment and his experience of working within UNMIK reinforce our feeling that his new mission will be successful, at a time when negotiations on the definition of the future status of Kosovo are entering into a critical phase.

The briefing we have just heard, in addition to the dense report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/707), gives us a better picture of the developments in the field.

The presence here of Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, the President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo of the Republic of Serbia, also gave us valuable testimony concerning the realities of the situation on the ground, which my delegation greatly appreciates.

We share the analysis of the Secretary-General with regard to progress made. We welcome that progress, as it seems to reflect the response that we all were expecting with regard to the Council's repeatedly expressed concerns with regard to the lack of progress in standards implementation.

Three months after our last meeting on the situation in Kosovo, the Council's appeal for effective implementation of standards increasingly seems to have been heeded. The report of the Secretary-General shows that, despite some challenges that remain, the Kosovo authorities, under the leadership of Prime Minister Agim Çeku, have shown great commitment in that area. Whether it concerns the implementation of the 13 priorities defined last June by the Contact Group, or security — although that is still fragile — or education, transportation, the return of refugees or minority rights, we must say that during the reporting period, more than before, a real effort was made to seek solutions to specific problems encountered by the various communities.

Those efforts must, of course, be continued. That is why we call upon all of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to continue to take the necessary steps to make the needed improvements on the ground that are conducive to the sustainable settlement of the situation. Those improvements are particularly essential with regard to national reconciliation, reconciliation among the various populations regarding security, respect for the cultural and religious heritage of Kosovo and the establishment of constructive and trusting relations among the minorities.

We also appeal to the Belgrade authorities to promote better participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions. We believe that the harmonious functioning of the Institutions, including the participation of everyone, is the only guarantee for the effective implementation of standards. Everyone has stressed the importance and the impact of that in the final settlement of the question of Kosovo.

My delegation renews its conviction that building a multi-ethnic democratic society serving the interest of all communities offers the best conditions for a lasting solution and for the stability of the region. Congo therefore attaches great importance to the implementation of those benchmarks. We think they are decisive for the better ownership by the Kosovo people of their future. Whatever the future orientation, it will help to improve the daily lives of everyone and to introduce the prospect of Kosovo being integrated into Europe.

Of course the international community will continue to fully support the political process here, but it still remains that it is primarily up to the two parties to demonstrate the necessary political will, which is the only way to promote a final and lasting solution to this conflict that has gone on for far too long. We therefore hope that the parties will move along those lines, in this decisive phase, which is being guided by Mr. Martti Ahtisaari.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Like others, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, for his very useful briefing. We welcome him to his new and immensely challenging duties and look forward to working with him at this crucial time for the future of Kosovo. I would also like to thank the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of

Serbia for Kosovo, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, for her statement.

I associate myself fully with the statement to be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We are pleased to note that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have made significant efforts to improve the implementation of standards since the last report. Denmark would like to welcome the commitment to move forward shown by the Administration in Pristina. However, there are a number of areas where further attention is needed, not least within those of the rule of law and freedom of movement. Security incidents, whether or not they are ethnically motivated, undermine reconciliation and threaten progress.

We welcome the concrete steps taken by the Provisional Institutions to improve conditions for Kosovo's minorities. However, it is clear that those steps do not automatically improve relations between the majority and the minorities. The leadership of the Provisional Institutions needs to create confidence among all of Kosovo's groups. That can be achieved only by outreach and by showing a genuine willingness to compromise.

We are very concerned about the step taken by municipalities in northern Kosovo to end contacts with the Provisional Institutions and to set up parallel structures. Encouraging a spirit of non-cooperation is not in anyone's best interest. We urge Belgrade to encourage Kosovo Serb representatives to participate constructively in the Provisional Institutions in Pristina, and not least in the municipal bodies.

We all wish for a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future. Non-cooperation, isolation and entrenched positions will not lead to a better future. Flexibility and compromise are prerequisites for a sustainable solution. The primary beneficiaries will be all Kosovars, regardless of ethnic group, the population of the Republic of Serbia and, indeed, all the people of the Western Balkans. Therefore, cooperation and participation are in everyone's best interest.

My country views Kosovo as a key regional issue. Denmark steadfastly supports UNMIK, the UNMIK police and the Kosovo Force. We look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous future, which the peoples of the region deserve. That will entail close regional cooperation towards the common integration of these truly European countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions, where they rightfully belong. However, the Euro-Atlantic perspectives depend upon the implementation of standards and a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future status.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to welcome Mr. Joachim Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I wish him success in his endeavour at this very important stage for the future of Kosovo. We assure him of our full cooperation. We also thank him for the comprehensive report he has just presented to us on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and events in that province.

We would also like to thank Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for her statement. We also welcome the presence at the Council once again of Prime Minister Agim Çeku of Kosovo.

It is encouraging to note the progress made in the two processes that are currently taking place in Kosovo. As we are aware, the process to determine Kosovo's future status has enjoyed high-level active participation from both sides. However, we must acknowledge that the results have thus far been limited as regards common ground between the delegations of Serbia and Kosovo. As the report points out, discussions in the context of that process have included the political situation and underlying issues, such as those pertaining to Kosovo territory north of the River Ibar.

Tensions in the north nevertheless continue. We deplore the incidents of violence that have taken place in recent weeks, the cessation of contact with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government by some municipalities and the organization of parallel security structures. We regret that apprehension and mistrust persist between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo as regards those and other issues. No political agreement or anything else will be lasting in Kosovo without building real trust between the two communities. We believe that the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the governance structures is key to increasing their involvement in political life. We call upon Belgrade to stop discouraging their participation.

In the other process, it is encouraging to know that the ongoing political process has had a positive influence on the willingness of the authorities of Kosovo to meet the standards and to achieve results in that regard, namely, the completion of 5 of the 13 priorities that have been established. That demonstrates the commitment of Kosovo's leaders and its Provisional Institutions to implement the objectives established by the international community.

We take note of the efforts that have been made to make it possible to revitalize the implementation process. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to work energetically on the key areas identified in the report. Among others, those include strengthening contacts with all communities, promoting reconciliation and trust between communities, giving the requisite attention to the security situation and the rule of law, and bringing to justice all those responsible for acts of violence. In other words, through those steps, all communities should be reassured that they will have a place in the future of a multi-ethnic Kosovo, regardless of the final result of the process.

Argentina believes that there cannot be a prosperous and peaceful future for Kosovo without full respect for the diversity of the people living in Kosovo. As the Contact Group has already affirmed, the result of the process to determine the future status will have to be acceptable to the majority of the people of Kosovo. At the same time, however, it will also have to respect and protect the rights of minorities. We urge the parties to live up to the task and to their historic responsibility during the talks on status. In doing so they should show flexibility in their respective positions, in the context of a true spirit of compromise.

Lastly, we urge the Provisional Institutions to persevere with rigorous implementation of the standards, so as to achieve the objective of establishing the foundations for a multi-ethnic and democratic society in Kosovo where all communities that so desire can live in dignity and security.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Greece.

I welcome the presence of the President of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic. I would like to join others in welcoming here for the first time Mr. Rücker, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I thank him for his presentation. I would also like to welcome, among the delegation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

Greece associates itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit myself to a few brief remarks.

The Secretary-General's report clearly indicates that over the past few months the provisional authorities have continued their efforts towards progress in the implementation of standards. There is now concrete progress in some areas, especially on a number of the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group. This is a positive development which we welcome.

We note once again, however, that additional efforts will be required for all 13 priorities to be implemented. Furthermore, implementation of the rest of the standards — those not on the list of 13 priorities — remains of equal importance for the creation of a multi-ethnic, stable and democratic Kosovo.

We are concerned by the lack of progress in the key areas of decentralization, as well as in other crucial and sensitive areas such as returns, dialogue, and cultural and religious heritage. It is regrettable that, as the Secretary-General mentions in his report, high-level outreach by Kosovo Albanian leaders to minority communities has decreased during the reporting period.

The security situation remains far from satisfactory. We join others in condemning the latest violent incident last month in Kosovska Mitrovica and reiterate the need for all such incidents to be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. We also condemn the increase in incidents of vandalism of Serbian orthodox churches, which undermines the progress made in the reconstruction of religious sites damaged during the violence of March 2004.

We have on many occasions stressed here the need for reconciliation as an absolute requirement for the creation of a peaceful and secure future for all the communities in Kosovo. Reconciliation, however, presupposes the involvement of both the Kosovo Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians. We therefore reiterate the need for the Kosovo Serbs to engage, as the only way to serve their own best interests, with the Provisional Institutions. We kindly urge Belgrade once again to

encourage and not to hamper the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions.

Regarding the ongoing political process for the determination of Kosovo's future status, we reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the Vienna process. We echo the Secretary-General's disappointment over the absence of common ground in the positions of the two parties. We support his call for greater flexibility and a spirit of compromise. We continue to believe that the best outcome will be one that is reached through a negotiated and mutually acceptable settlement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, for a very comprehensive and informative presentation that clearly set out the progress that has been achieved in Kosovo.

I would like to welcome Mr. Rücker in his new post as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. His long-term experience in leading UNMIK Pillar IV gives him an excellent understanding of the situation on the ground and thus the qualifications required for successfully carrying out his new tasks. I would like to underline the European Union's strong support for Mr. Rücker in his efforts to implement resolution 1244 (1999) and to prepare for the transition from UNMIK to the future international presence in Kosovo after the status issue is resolved. Special Representative Rücker will be dealing with the double challenge of supporting the ongoing status negotiations and the preparations for the post-UNMIK period.

I would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the former Special Representative, Søren Jessen-Petersen.

We urge all the parties to cooperate fully with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in a constructive and committed manner. We fully support the Secretary-General's view that Pristina and Belgrade should constructively take part in the status negotiations so as to enable the Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, to complete the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. The Special Envoy will continue to have our fullest support, and we welcome his efforts to reach a negotiated solution.

Resolving the status issue is necessary in order to maintain stability in the western Balkans region. The status quo is unsustainable and must be replaced by a solution that provides lasting peace and stability in the region and promotes Kosovo's European integration. The European Union underlines its long-term commitment to Kosovo.

The EU fully supports UNMIK's efforts, together with those of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) in Kosovo, to achieve concrete progress on standards implementation. The implementation of the priority requirements are crucial to ensure a multi-ethnic Kosovo, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that all of the standards are important for Kosovo's future. The European Union welcomes the progress which has been achieved in priority areas such as the functioning of democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as sustainable returns and the rights of communities.

While this progress is encouraging, it is clear that the successful implementation of standards for Kosovo will require further efforts by all parties. It is also necessary to prepare for a phased transition from a reform process driven by United Nations standards to a reform process based on the requirements of European integration. That gradual transition has already started.

The European Partnership and the annual progress reports and regular policy and technical dialogue ensured by the European Commission are helping the Kosovo Government to identify the priority areas of reforms needed to move closer to the European Union.

We have already integrated the essence of the Kosovo standards into our European Partnership, which will make for better monitoring and easier implementation. We welcome the Kosovo Government's recently adopted European Partnership Action Plan outlining the Government's strategy for

implementing the merged standards. In parallel with the status process, the PISG must also concentrate on the reform process necessary for preparing for Kosovo's European future.

It is a matter of concern, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, that not all ethnic communities are participating meaningfully in the Provisional Institutions. We share the Secretary-General's concern as to the governance of the portion of Kosovo territory which lies north of the Ibar river. We once again encourage Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo's governance structures. As the Secretary-General points out, the current lack of engagement of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's institutions remains an obstacle to the fulfilment of certain standards. All of Kosovo's citizens should benefit from the same level of social and administrative services. The Serb community living in Kosovo should be clearly and actively encouraged to participate in the Kosovo institutions, in which they can most effectively advocate for their own interests.

The European Union is aware that the Kosovo status process is a major challenge for the international community and has a vital interest in a positive and sustainable outcome. We support the efforts of Special Envoy Ahtisaari to engage both Belgrade and Pristina through direct talks and expert consultations on key areas such as decentralization, cultural heritage and religious sites, as well as economic and minority rights issues. The views of the two sides remain divergent, but the process so far has been useful in clarifying their positions and exploring possible common ground. The EU fully supports those efforts and, through its EU representative to the Kosovo future status process and through the Commission, plays a leading role. The EU also recently welcomed the decision to move forward into direct political talks on the status issue and called upon both sides to engage constructively in that phase of the negotiations.

Depending on the future status settlement, the engagement of the European Union in Kosovo is planned to have three main components: the EU contribution to a possible future international civilian presence, a possible European Security and Defence Policy operation in the broader field of the rule of law, and an EU presence related to the European perspective on Kosovo.

Preparations are well under way in all these areas. An EU planning team has already been established and deployed in Kosovo to make preparations for a possible Security and Defence Policy operation in the fields of police and justice, which are areas crucial for the security and the stability of the region. Preparations for the future EU role in Kosovo are taking place in close cooperation with the European Commission to ensure a coherent approach. High Representative Javier Solana, together with Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, has already prepared three insightful reports on the future European commitment to Kosovo. Those reports serve as a basis for future planning.

We believe that, following a settlement and the phasing out of UNMIK, Kosovo's own institutions should be responsible for managing its affairs as much as possible. Local ownership and accountability should rest with Kosovo. The international engagement should help Kosovo's institutions to assume full responsibility for Kosovo over time, on the basis of rigid benchmarking of performance and capabilities.

The objective of the European Union is to ensure that Kosovo becomes a reliable partner, progressing together with the rest of the region towards the EU. In particular, it needs the political will and genuine commitment of all parties involved in the current status negotiations. As the Secretary-General has noted in his report, it is crucial to reassure all communities that they will have a place in Kosovo in the future, regardless of its status. The future settlement should guarantee the protection of the rights and the identity of all communities in Kosovo.

Together with the Secretary-General, we urge all parties concerned to cease inflammatory accusations and to pursue constructive behaviour to ensure a sustainable future for Kosovo. Belgrade must also play its part in achieving those aims. Serbia has a crucial role in the efforts to stabilize the Western Balkan region and to ensure its smooth integration into the Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures.

I would like to underline that economic progress is essential for the creation of a tolerant, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. To date, the EU has provided more than €2.6 billion to Kosovo to address urgent post-conflict needs, develop and strengthen Kosovo's new institutions, support the returns process and foster economic development. Furthermore, the EU financed UNMIK Pillar IV, which has been assisting in the revitalization of economic activity in Kosovo and in

the creation of a modern, open-market economy attractive for foreign investments. The EU is also committed to assisting Kosovo's economy in the future. The aim is to create sustainable conditions for economic growth and development, as well as to bring Kosovo's legislative and administrative frameworks closer to European standards. The rule of law and security conditions are crucial for the prospects of the economic growth and development of Kosovo.

Finally, UNMIK's work is coming to a closing phase. The smooth transition can continue only if the necessary funding in crucial areas is available. The EU is the largest donor to Kosovo, and we encourage others to consider as a priority how they can deepen their assistance to Kosovo. An international donor conference is foreseen after the status settlement. A long-term commitment from the international donor community will be needed to ensure a lasting and durable status settlement in Kosovo.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): At the outset, let me join my colleagues in welcoming you, Sir, as President of the Security Council. I also welcome Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and Mr. Agim Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his profound report (S/2006/707) on the situation in Kosovo and to express our appreciation to Mr. Joachim Rücker, the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his detailed briefing. My country would like to assure the Special Representative of its full support and to wish him every success in his important international mission at this very sensitive time.

I would like to flag several points that, in my delegation's view, are of crucial importance in the context of today's debate. When we read through the current report of the Secretary-General, we can see some signs of positive developments in Kosovo; at the same time we get a clear picture of the many problems that remain to be addressed there. We welcome the progress made in reforming and strengthening the capacities of the province's Institutions of Self-Government and in solving community-related issues, although there is an urgent need for more concrete and decisive steps in the overall implementation of standards.

As essential preconditions for a successful settlement of Kosovo's future status, the issues of returns, broader engagement by Kosovo Serbs in political and institutional life at the municipal and central levels and the protection of minority rights and of Orthodox religious and cultural sites continue to be high on the agenda, much to our regret. Given the ongoing political process, we also find it particularly disturbing that security incidents, affecting primarily the Serb population of the province, continue to take place. To prevent a possible worsening of the situation, those responsible must be brought to justice immediately.

Agreeing on the need to give new impetus to the ongoing political process, and supporting efforts to achieve a viable and lasting settlement of the situation in Kosovo, Ukraine consistently advocates stabilizing the political, economic and security situation in Kosovo on the basis of the fundamental relevant Security Council decisions, including resolution 1244 (1999), as well as fully observing the principles of international law.

We welcome the direct negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina on defining the political status of Kosovo, conducted under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahtisaari, although the results achieved so far are not as convincing as we expected at the beginning of the entire process. Nevertheless, we appreciate the progress made on technical issues, which could constitute a good basis for major compromises on other important issues.

In our view, the establishment of effective dialogue among all Kosovo communities and engaging all stakeholders are the only way out, leading to a mutually acceptable and comprehensive compromise settlement. It is obvious that any decision on the future status of Kosovo should guarantee the further implementation of the democratic standards and full respect for human rights and the rights of all ethnic Kosovo groups. In our view, it should first and foremost promote long-term regional security.

Ukraine believes that, given the fragile situation in Kosovo itself and in the wider area, the political process of determining the future status of Kosovo should be handled with the maximum level of

responsibility by all the parties involved. Any imposed decision or hasty actions leading to the unilateral change of the borders of an internationally recognized democratic State in the Balkan region will destabilize the situation and set a dangerous precedent in Europe and the entire world. We are especially concerned that the Kosovo model could be taken as a scenario by separatist movements in the post-Soviet era.

To our great disappointment, we are witnessing the unfolding of such an undesirable scenario, with attempts by some self-proclaimed regimes in the post-Soviet space to use the settlement of the situation in Kosovo as a precedent to claim independence. Despite the concerted efforts of the international community to resolve frozen conflicts, with full respect for the territorial integrity of the countries concerned, announcements of independence referendums in the Transdniestria region of the Republic of Moldova and in South Ossetia, Georgia, in our view pose a major threat and challenge to the stability and continuity of the process of the settlement of those conflicts.

In this context, it is particularly important to ensure that the eventual decision of the Security Council on the final status of Kosovo does not impose a solution, but is taken only with the clearly expressed consent of both parties concerned.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Neritani (Albania): Let me begin by welcoming the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker. During this challenging phase of transition — a crucial moment for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) — his proven commitment and abilities are a good guarantor and indicator that the successful and resolute work of his predecessor will continue. The Albanian Government will continue to support his efforts in pursuing the goal of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to the former Special Representative, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen. Our appreciation also goes to UNMIK, KFOR, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union (EU) for their continuing dedication and commitment to Kosovo. We welcome the EU's invaluable efforts and recent activities on the ground, which will assist in a coherent transition.

I would also like to recognize the presence of Prime Minister Çeku here today and to warmly welcome him to this meeting. We congratulate him for his continuing leadership and the achievements that have been noted during the period covered by the report. We are convinced that, under Mr. Çeku's leadership, the Government will continue to provide effective governance to build a viable, multi-ethnic and prosperous Kosovo for all its citizens.

I would also like to welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, representative of the Serbian delegation.

I thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report (S/2006/707) and express my delegation's appreciation for that realistic and substantive document. We share his overall assessment that further progress with significant achievements continues to be the current trend in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General underlined in paragraph 12 of the report,

> "The ongoing political process has had a noteworthy effect on the commitment of the Kosovo authorities to standards implementation, and its results. The Provisional Institutions have also shown a greater willingness to take responsibility for both minority concerns and for improved governance".

It must be emphasized that the security situation has remained stable and has not been adversely affected by the ongoing future status process. We note with satisfaction that progress on standards implementation has continued during the reporting period and that to date, as a result of the Government's priorities and commitment, a good number of priority standards have been reported as completed, while the remaining ones are on the right track for completion within the specified time frame.

The recent adoption of the European Partnership Action Plan by the Kosovo Government marks a new phase. It incorporates the standards as requirements for Kosovo's long-term European perspective. It reflects the Government's clear vision of this perspective for Kosovo and its commitment to ensuring that effective standards implementation remains a high-priority goal and an important responsibility during and beyond the final status. We join in the Secretary-General's call, and we are convinced that Prime Minister Çeku's Government will sustain the positive momentum that it has created. Standards implementation, especially the

remaining Contact Group priorities, is crucial in order to ensure both a multi-ethnic Kosovo and a better future for all of its citizens.

It is commonly understood and widely accepted that the main goal remains the building of a multi-ethnic Kosovo. It is equally essential that Kosovo Serbs participate fully in the institutions and in public life as the best — indeed, the only viable — way of expressing and promoting their legitimate concerns.

The Belgrade authorities should respond to the coherent policies of the international community by removing all impediments to Kosovo Serb participation in the Kosovo institutions. As paragraph 31 of the report correctly underlined, "Lack of participation is a disservice to the Kosovo Serb population" and, as stated in paragraph 9, "remains an obstacle to the fulfilment of certain standards".

At the same time, we appeal to the Kosovo Albanians to redouble their efforts in respect of freedom and the rights of minorities and to increase their outreach to all communities. We hold the view that both Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo should leave the past behind, engage in reconciliation, strengthen their cooperation and look forward towards their common future.

The Albanian Government continues to support dialogue between the representatives of Albanians and Serbs, and calls upon both sides to take a realistic approach. We are pleased with the ongoing bilateral talks in Vienna on issues relating to future status and other critical issues, including decentralization, the rights of minorities and religious and cultural heritage. We encourage both sides to continue this dialogue and to engage seriously and constructively with Mr. Ahtisaari and his team.

The political process to determine Kosovo's final status is continuing, and is now approaching its final stage. At this very critical juncture, international community coherence on this matter is very significant and indispensable. Albania will continue to play an active role and to take a constructive approach. We continue to hold the view that the status process should proceed steadily and swiftly, with a decisive solution by the end of 2006. As the guiding principles clearly state, once it has started, the process cannot be blocked. Further delay would prolong the instability and uncertainty and would not serve Kosovo, Serbia, or the surrounding region.

We continue to share in the international support for Mr. Ahtisaari and his team. We reiterate our strong support for the Contact Group guiding principles that there should be no changes of borders, no partition of Kosovo and no union with any other country or part of any other country. We support a realistic solution, fully grounded in today's reality of this sui generis case — a stable and multi-ethnic solution, one which will respect the overwhelming and clear will of the people of Kosovo and be acceptable to them. Such an outcome should contribute to strengthening the stability and security of Kosovo and the region as a whole, and be in tune with the spirit and the trends of regional cooperation.

We stress our strong conviction that the most realistic, pragmatic and just solution of the status issue would be independence, with the civil and security presence of the international community continuing for a certain period of time. By that, we mean an independence that ensures the promotion and protection of the rights and cultural and religious heritage of Serbs and all other minorities; an independence that brings about a society in which all people in Kosovo can live in dignity and prosperity and without fear. We are encouraged that the Kosovo leadership, civil society, the media, the relevant institutions and the broader community are demonstrating political and social cohesion, growing unity and cooperation with the international community with a view to building such a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, integrated into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

We are confident that independence will generate and guarantee social and economic stability and security for Kosovo and the whole region, help establish a sustainable, multi-ethnic and democratic society there and pave the way for fulfilment of Kosovo's European perspective. Albania shares the broader view that an international military and civilian presence in Kosovo, even after the determination of status, is going to be essential for the success of all those endeavours.

In conclusion, let me reassure the Council that the Albanian Government will continue to offer its constructive approach by actively playing a helpful, moderating role in the region and specifically on this particular matter. The international community and the negotiating team of Mr. Ahtisaari will continue to have

a reliable partner in Albania throughout the upcoming process and beyond.

The President: The President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Raskovic-Ivic.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): First of all, I would like to thank everybody for their statements and to say to Mr. Rücker that the Coordinating Centre for Kosovo and Metohija is ready to cooperate with the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to refer to the statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) that was made by Her Excellency Ms. Kirsti Lintonen. Serbia enthusiastically welcomes the EU's objectives regarding Kosovo and Metohija, as well as its contributions to a possible future international civilian presence. We are, of course, committed to cooperation with a new EU mission when the time comes, including during the preparatory phase.

Let me say that there are many things upon which we can cooperate, first of all the issue of return. Although the European Union statement said that there has been progress on returns, I would like to disagree at this time and say that there is a lot of work still to be done on that issue.

One other thing that has been mentioned here is the issue of progress in the rule of law. From the Serbian point of view, there is a perception that there is a culture of impunity in Kosovo. That is based on realistic data. For example, from 1999 until today, 931 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been killed. For those misdeeds, no one has been indicted or taken to court. However, we believe that things are changing for the better and that we will cooperate on many things, such as regional security and returns.

I would like to say a few words on the reasons for the non-participation of the Serbian community in local government and in the Provisional Institutions. In 2002, local elections were held, and five municipalities have representatives at the local level. In 2004, there were elections for the Kosovo parliament. Serbs boycotted those elections; only 811 people went to the polling station and voted. Thus, we have now Serbian representatives backed by only 0.3 per cent of the electoral body. This electoral body consists of 140,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians in the region of Kosovo and Metohija and 230,000 people who are outside the administrative border and are internally displaced in Serbia. What we would like to have as Serbs — not as Belgrade, but as Serbs — are legal and legitimate representatives. I think that the Council will agree with me that the endorsement of 0.3 per cent of the electoral body is not legitimate and legal Serbian representation. We think — Serbs think — that this is not the end of the story.

The key to many issues concerning Serbs in the region is decentralization. If decentralization were in place — I do not say implemented, but agreed upon — then we could have elections. Elections could be organized very quickly after that. A bottom-up process would then occur: first, representatives in the local communities, then in the future, decentralized municipalities, and then representatives in the Kosovo parliament.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Rücker to respond to comments that have been made.

Mr. Rücker: I would like to thank everyone around the table for the encouraging words of welcome and the expressions of support for my mission. I am also grateful for the interventions highlighting so many subjects that are important for our mission. I would like to briefly comment on just a few of these: Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic just mentioned the non-participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Institutions; freedom of movement, which was highlighted by several speakers; returns; and finally, crime, which was a recurrent theme.

Regarding the non-participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the past elections, we have the impression in Kosovo that this was induced, or at least not stopped by Belgrade. I think the Serbian Government should avoid even the perception that it is creating the very conditions that it deplores in terms of the political integration and economic participation of the Kosovo Serbs, which was a recurrent theme as something desirable.

With regard to freedom of movement, which was mentioned by several speakers, I think we have seen steady improvement both in reality and in perception. The most recent Kosovo Police Service freedom of movement assessment reports that 93 per cent of the people in Kosovo — including, of course, all

communities — travel outside their village, and that 94 per cent of these feel safe in doing so. Perceptions of security and the freedom to move, particularly of the Kosovo Serb community south of Mitrovica and the Kosovo Albanian community north of Mitrovica, continue to be undermined by acts of intimidation and by rumours. That, of course, is due to frequent reporting of statements by senior Serbian officials that Kosovo Serbs are not safe and do not have freedom of movement. This exacerbates those perceptions and has a significant damaging psychological impact. Again, I think even the perception should be avoided that something is created, only to be deplored in the next phase.

With regard to returns, I am very grateful for the encouragement referring to what we have recently concluded with Belgrade. Yes, there was the signing of the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Returns between the Provisional Institutions, the Government of Serbia and UNMIK on 6 June 2006. It further reaffirmed the commitment of Pristina and Belgrade to intensify the return process, which is crucial. And most important, it has lead to 70 families that have agreed to return to Srpski Babuš by signing the respective agreements. We have to do much more in that respect. I fully agree with all that was said.

The reasons for the low number of returns are, of course, multiple. They include the lack of jobs, the economy and lack of clarity on status, which all play a role. But we are fully committed to that.

Let me now turn to the issue of crime. We absolutely reject accusations by Belgrade that we are turning a blind eye to ethnically motivated crime in Kosovo. In fact, we specifically direct the police to monitor and prioritize any crime that is potentially ethnically motivated. We use the term "PME" — potentially ethnically motivated crime — and that is very closely monitored. Just to set the record straight, potentially ethnically motivated crimes in Kosovo are significantly on the decline. There is also a trend towards the same absolute numbers of affected Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs.

While some crime in Kosovo is ethnically motivated, the great majority is not, and it is irresponsible to politicize every security incident by characterizing it as ethnically motivated before the facts have even been investigated. There are lots of examples which I will spare you, but which I could give you in that respect.

With regard to the recent bombing incident in Mitrovica, we are actively pursuing that. One arrest has been made and investigations are ongoing. Also, with regard to the follow-up of 4 March 2004, which was mentioned by several delegations, 243 persons have been successfully prosecuted and convicted of crimes and minor offences in connection with the March 2004 riots. In addition, on 25 August 2006, the international pre-trial judge ordered the detention of four defendants suspected of being involved in the burning down of numerous buildings in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje during the riots. It is expected that more arrests will follow as the investigation continues. Those recent arrests mark significant progress in the follow-up, which is not reflected in the report that is in front of Council members.

As regards individual cases that have been mentioned, it is very frustrating to see that allegations made in official communications from Belgrade, after we have duly responded and clarified the facts, are then used again in their original form in public statements. We have again seen evidence today of that phenomenon on the floor of the Council. I do not intend to engage in a numbers game or to go into individual cases with the Serbian representative.

Our factual position on the security situation for the reporting period is amply reflected in the technical assessment annexed to the report of the Secretary-General. That technical assessment is the product of a well-structured mechanism of regular collection, collation and evaluation of facts that involves multiple agencies at various levels, including, in addition to UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions, the Contact Group representatives in Pristina, who have been very intensively engaged in the vetting of standards implementation reports. This is, in other words, as credible as it can get.

Let me thank the Council again for giving us the opportunity to present this report today.

The President: I thank Mr. Rücker for the clarifications he just provided.

There are no more speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5523

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5523rd meeting

Thursday, 14 September 2006, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Biaboroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/706)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-52155 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/706)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Qazi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004), contained in document S/2006/706.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and by Mr. John Bolton, representative of the United States, on behalf of the multinational force.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

Mr. Qazi: The Secretary-General's report before the Security Council comes at a time when the challenges facing the Iraqi people have never appeared more daunting. As emphasized in the report,

> "the time has come for [Iraq's] constitutionally elected Government and the international community to place the safety and welfare of the Iraqi people at the front and centre of all their collective efforts" (*S/2006/706, para. 69*).

The key challenge to the Government of Iraq is to develop a truly national agenda that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Iraqis. Prime Minister Al-Maliki has laid out a range of initiatives in his National Reconciliation Plan and has taken initial steps to broaden the basis of support for his Government and to increase the effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces. The Prime Minister has included the Baghdad peace initiative in his National Reconciliation Plan, which is aimed at establishing a basis for mutual trust and protection among Baghdad's diverse communities. It is also encouraging that the Government of Iraq is seeking to establish a dialogue with those who have hitherto remained outside the political process. Those initiatives merit the widest possible support.

Ultimately, lasting improvements in security can be achieved only through negotiated solutions to complex political, economic, social and religious issues that meet the legitimate needs and interests of all Iraqis.

Although Iraq's problems have been overshadowed in recent months by crises elsewhere in the region, Iraq today has become one of the most violent conflict areas in the world. As highlighted in the report, in many parts of the country insurgent, militia and terrorist attacks, as well as gross violations of human rights, have continued to inflict untold suffering, particularly on innocent civilians, most notably women, children and minorities. The Iraqi people have every right to expect their elected leaders to reverse those worrisome trends, which could endanger the social and political fabric of the country. Given Iraq's importance and potential, its neighbours

and the wider international community have a vital stake in helping Iraq become a peaceful, stable and prosperous partner, fully integrated within the region and the international community.

The International Compact with Iraq could become an important vehicle to that end. The Compact, co-chaired by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, is an initiative for a new partnership between Iraq and the international community. Considerable preparatory work has been initiated to create an effective framework for the Compact in which the Government can develop its economic programme according to clearly defined priorities, benchmarks and commitments.

At the preparatory meeting held in Abu Dhabi on 10 September, the Government of Iraq outlined the key priorities on which to form a Compact, such as effective public resource management and economic reform in private sector development and social sector reforms. The Government of Iraq also pledged its strong commitment to tackling corruption, creating a transparent and efficient oil sector, developing a solid budgetary framework, improving governance and building and consolidating effective national institutions. The Government recognized that good governance and the resolution of security and political challenges are interlinked and are prerequisites for progress in all other areas. Participants welcomed the commitments made by the Government and pledged their support to work closely with the Government of Iraq in further developing the Compact, with the assistance of the United Nations and the World Bank.

For its part, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) remains fully committed to support and facilitate the development of the Compact and to assist in its effective implementation. As the Council is aware, the Secretary-General has taken the initiative to convene a high-level meeting at United Nations Headquarters on 18 September which, in addition to reviewing progress in the implementation of resolution 1546 (2004), will review the development of the International Compact.

The commitments of the Government of Iraq to make urgent progress on national reconciliation, political inclusion and consensus-building, in addition to the Compact, also deserve the full support of the region and the wider international community. Fostering national reconciliation and building effective national institutions must be an Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned process. As a key priority, Iraq's elected parliament, the Council of Representatives, will need to decide on a range of legislation to make substantial parts of Iraq's Constitution operational. It must also commence a constitutionally required review process to strengthen the Constitution as a document that reflects the national consensus.

The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support has facilitated very considerable preparatory work for a constitutional review process through arranging several multi-party dialogues between Iraqi political representatives and constitutional experts, as well as international experts and consultants on key constitutional issues. I hope that a constitutional review will be used as a vehicle to promote national dialogue and reconciliation. Far from provoking controversy, a well-prepared and managed constitutional review can create a growing repository of fundamental agreements that, if adhered to, will be a solid foundation for Iraq's developing democracy.

The members of the Council of Representatives bear a historic responsibility to pursue their constituency interests only in the framework of the national interest. Their credibility rests on the extent to which they are able to exercise their individual judgement to protect Iraq's newly established national institutions from being influenced by particular interests. In all our contacts, UNAMI has therefore emphasized that Iraq's new independent institutions must be protected by effective laws and be enabled to discharge their responsibilities independently and impartially, without fear or favour.

Similarly, good governance requires a professional and well-managed civil service. Above all, the effective and transparent delivery of public services will depend on public confidence in the competence and accountability of those charged with their implementation. The Government has initiated important reforms in key ministries following public and international concern over the activities of some of their personnel. It is to be commended for those efforts and encouraged to ensure that adequate internal oversight and professional performance maintenance mechanisms are put in place.

All of that may seem far removed from the daily realities that face so many Iraqis. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, one of the key challenges

remains ensuring greater respect for human rights and the rule of law. A priority for UNAMI is to assist the Government in setting up a strong national human rights protection system by establishing an independent human rights commission, reinforcing the judiciary and the capacity of key ministries to promote and protect human rights, and by supporting non-governmental organizations and the development of a culture of human rights. Strengthening human rights and the rule of law is necessary to create solid foundations for development and reconstruction efforts. If effective remedies for present and past crimes remain elusive, more Iraqis might take the law into their own hands. Action on transitional justice will complement those efforts and help pursue with vigour the twin priorities of national reconciliation and accountability for human rights violations.

UNAMI is also providing advice to the Government on the growing problem of internal displacement, particularly with regard to shelter and assistance. The report draws attention to the fact that some 200,000 citizens have been forced to leave their homes, mainly in Baghdad, since the Samarra incident of 22 February this year. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have nearly depleted their resources earmarked for emergency humanitarian activities. Similarly, the Government is constrained in its ability to adequately respond to the situation. There is now an urgent need for new funding to meet the needs of the displaced.

Highlighting those challenges is not to deny that in a number of areas there has been measurable progress in the delivery of services. But, as the Secretary-General has stressed in his report,

> "The Iraqi people and their leaders have arrived at an important crossroads: if they are able to build firm foundations for the common interest of all Iraqis, the promise of peace and prosperity will be within reach. However, if current patterns of discord and violence prevail for much longer, there is a grave danger of a breakdown of the Iraqi State, and potentially of civil war". (*ibid., para. 69*)

Whatever the challenges of the moment — and there are many — there is still reason for optimism. The demonstrated resilience of the Iraqi people in the face of a succession of calamities and tribulations is reason enough to know that they will not be defeated in achieving their aspirations. The best option of the international community is to prove the pessimists wrong by assisting the people and Government of Iraq in realizing their national vision.

Accordingly, the time has come to hold focused discussions on how best to assist Iraq on its way towards a stable, peaceful and prosperous State. Those discussions should be as open and inclusive as possible, to ensure win-win approaches to addressing critical issues. The Government of Iraq has already made a bold start in addressing major issues through its initiatives, programmes and outreach efforts and through security and economic reforms. The international community must seize this opportunity to provide real support for Iraq's efforts to transform itself into a participatory and institutionalized democracy that ensures for all its people the full, secure and prosperous lives they have struggled and made sacrifices to achieve. There are few more noble endeavours to which to devote our energies and capacities.

UNAMI remains fully committed to play its part pursuant to its mandates under resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1700 (2006). I am grateful for the continued support of the Security Council for UNAMI's role in Iraq. A strong consensus in the Council in support of the new Government of Iraq and the United Nations role remains essential. While the United Nations presence and ability to operate effectively remain severely constrained by the security environment, UNAMI is exploring how it can maximize its impact and which tasks can be prioritized. In that regard, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to Member States, from both within and outside the Multinational Force, who support the United Nations in Iraq by providing military advisers, guard forces and movement and aviation support. UNAMI will continue to stand by the people of Iraq and will make every effort to help generate tangible progress for a democratic and prosperous Iraq that is at peace with itself, its neighbours and the wider international community.

The President: I thank Special Representative Qazi for his briefing.

Mr. Bolton (United States): As requested by the Security Council in resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1637 (2005), I am pleased to report on behalf of the 29 countries making up the Multinational Forces-Iraq

(MNF-I) on the Force's progress towards fulfilling its mandate.

This most recent reporting period coincides with the first 90 days of a democratically elected, representative unity Government — a substantial break from Iraq's past. In early June, the formation of a national unity Government was completed with the appointments of the Ministers of Interior, Defence and State for National Security. On 25 June, Prime Minister al-Maliki presented a national reconciliation and dialogue project to the Council of Representatives. This project seeks to reconcile past inequities and rally Iraqis around the principle of equality without sectarian divisions. It looks to establish the basis for national unity through the democratic process and create the conditions for Iraq to assume a leading regional and international role. In addition, the Council of Representatives adopted an accelerated schedule of sessions. Most of the 24 Council committees have formed and named chairs. The Council is making progress on key legislation required to implement the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution.

In late July, the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, with the strong support of the United States, the United Kingdom and other donor States and international financial institutions, launched an International Compact with Iraq. The International Compact will, over the next five years, bring together the international community and multilateral organizations to help Iraq achieve its vision of a united, federal and democratic country, at peace with its neighbours and itself, and economically self-sufficient and prosperous.

Since 2003, there have been significant successes in the development of legitimate political, economic and governmental institutions in Iraq. The unfolding of the democratic electoral process that we have witnessed in recent years has been a crucial success in building the foundations of a new, free and democratic Iraq.

Despite these achievements, obstacles remain. Setbacks in the level and nature of violence in Iraq continue to create significant challenges to stability, reconstruction and transition. Sectarian tensions, purposely incited by insurgents and extremists, increased over the last quarter, resulting in increased killings, kidnappings, attacks on civilians and increasing numbers of internally displaced persons. Extremists are increasingly interlocked in retaliatory violence and are seeking to expand their existing areas of influence. The sustained level of ethno-sectarian violence is one of the most significant threats to security and stability in Iraq.

Nonetheless, the Iraqi people continue to reject overwhelmingly violence as a mean to drive political change. The international community remains steadfast with the people of Iraq in their determined drive for a secure, stable and democratic country. We honour the memory and sacrifice of all who have lost their lives in the struggle for a federal, democratic, pluralist and unified Iraq.

The insurgents, extremists and terrorists remain capable of and intent on carrying out attacks against Iraqi civilians, officials and security forces, with the goal of destabilizing the legitimately elected Government of Iraq and denying the Iraqi people the democracy and promise of a better future that they have chosen the through free and fair elections.

During this period, four of Iraq's 18 provinces — Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Salah ad Din and Diyala — continued to experience more than 81 per cent of all attacks. Al-Anbar and Baghdad are the most seriously affected, accounting for 55 per cent of all attacks. Ninewa and Tamim provinces also saw significant increases in attacks over the previous quarter. Twelve provinces, containing more than 50 per cent of the population, experienced only five per cent of all attacks.

Attacks and civilian casualties, characterized by ethno-sectarian attacks and reprisals, have arisen. Violence escalated, notably in Baghdad, which, as the political, population and media centre of the country, is a high-value target for the terrorists. Nonetheless, terrorists have failed to advance their primary objectives, which include derailing Iraq's political process and widening their political support among the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people continue to express confidence in the Iraqi army to provide for their security and to reject the extremists' vision of Iraq's future.

The average number of weekly attacks increased 15 per cent over the previous reporting period's average, and Iraqi casualties increased by 51 per cent compared to the previous quarter.

MNF-I and the Iraqi Government continued to make progress, improving the security environment in Fallujah and some parts of northern Iraq. The Iraqi army has taken the lead in more counter-insurgency operations and assumed security responsibility in more areas.

The insurgency remains potent and viable, although its visibility has been overshadowed by the increase in sectarian violence it has sought foment. The rising sectarian strife defines the emerging nature of violence in mid-2006.

On 14 June, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki announced the Government's plan to provide improved security conditions in Baghdad. Operation Together Forward is an Iraqi-planned and led operation to ensure the security of Baghdad against attacks designed to uproot democracy and derail Iraq's commitment to progress. As part of this operation, Iraqi police, the Iraqi army and the national police, supported by the Multinational Forces, increased patrols and checkpoints in all areas of Baghdad, while concentrating on areas of the city that have witnessed increases in violence and sectarian killings. Security forces also worked to block terrorist entry into the capital city.

In July, during his first visit to the United States, Prime Minister al-Maliki and President Bush announced an adjustment to the Baghdad security plan. Multinational and Iraqi units were repositioned from less active areas of the country. Although in progress only a short time, this effort appears to have reduced Baghdad violence in the month of August. Initial press reports indicate that these adjustments to the Baghdad security plan have been welcomed by many Baghdad residents.

Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure continue to adversely affect oil revenues and the availability of electricity. The average weekly number of attacks on critical infrastructure continued to decline, decreasing from five per week to two per week. Although the number of attacks is decreasing, the essential services infrastructure will continue to be a high-value target for enemy elements. The Multinational Force will continue to work with the Iraqi Government and other international partners to strengthen further infrastructure security.

Although Baghdad remains the focus for sectarian and terrorist violence in Iraq, violence tied to the rejectionist insurgency, terrorist intimidation, political and tribal tensions and criminality continues in other regions. Sectarian violence is gradually spreading north into Diyala province and Kirkuk, as Sunni, Shia and Kurdish groups compete for provincial influence. Conflict in Al-Anbar province remains centred on the Sunni insurgency. Al-Qaida in Iraq continues its intimidation to coerce passive Sunni support, although tribes are pushing back to eject Al-Qaida and re-establish their dominant role. In the southern, predominantly Shia region of the country, political and tribal rivalries are a growing motive behind violence, particularly in Basra, with limited anti-Coalition attacks likely undertaken by rogue Shia militia with Iranian support.

Iraqi security forces continue to grow and improve and to conduct more and more independent operations each day. Multinational Forces continue to train, equip and mentor the ISF and to transition security responsibilities of areas to the Iraqi forces as proficiency allows and conditions permit. Transitions are evaluated area by area and region by region and are incremental to ensure an effective and successful transition of security responsibilities.

Iraq achieved another historic milestone on 13 July with the transfer of security responsibility in Al-Muthana province from MNF-I to the provincial Governor and civilian-controlled Iraqi police services. Moreover, since May of 2006, MNF-I has transferred an additional 10 forward operating bases to the Government of Iraq. Fifty-one of 110 such bases are now under Iraqi control. Dhi Qar province appears ready to assume security independence shortly, and several other provinces should meet the transition criteria before the end of the year.

In August, the Fourth Iraqi Army Division headquarters officially assumed the lead in its area of responsibility from the 101st Airborne Division. This achievement represents the halfway mark of our joint goal of putting all Iraqi security forces in the lead of coordinating, planning and conducting security operations in Iraq.

Iraqi security forces are increasingly taking the lead in operations and assuming primary responsibility for Iraq's security, as Iraqi army and police forces demonstrate an increased capability to plan and execute counter-insurgency operations.

As of 4 September, five Iraqi army divisions, 26 brigades, 85 battalions and two national police battalions assumed lead responsibility for security in their areas of operation. One hundred and six Iraqi army combat battalions and 17 strategic infrastructure battalions are conducting operations at varying levels of capability. Another three combat battalions are in the process of forming. In addition, 27 national police battalions are now operational and active. Although these units lead security operations, most still receive support from the multinational forces for their logistics and operations.

Institutional capability within the ministries of defence and interior is an increasingly important factor in the transition to Iraqi security self-reliance. As these ministries continue to staff, train and equip forces, efforts are focused on strengthening their capacity to direct, support and sustain themselves. With more than two thirds of the Iraqi army combat units now in the lead, the Multinational Force in Iraq's focus is shifting towards helping the Iraqis develop stronger logistics and command and control capabilities. MNFI will also continue to help develop and mentor the capacity of the Ministry of Defence to organize, train, equip and modernize its forces.

In the first week of September, the Ministry of Defence and the joint headquarters assumed operational control of the Iraqi ground forces command, the Iraqi navy and the Iraqi air force. The Iraqi ground forces command assumed operational control of the eighth Iraqi army division. The Government of Iraq will determine when the command is ready to assume more control, but the transfer demonstrates Iraq's increasing capabilities.

Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior forces now total more than 298,000 trained personnel. That includes over 115,000 Ministry of Defence personnel, over 118,000 police and over 65,000 other Ministry of Interior forces.

The Joint Committee to Achieve Iraqi Security Self-reliance announced by Prime Minister al-Maliki and President Bush on 25 July will develop a conditions-based road map for full transition of security responsibility.

The United Nations contributions in Iraq are vital. We urge the United Nations to continue to fulfil its mandate under resolution 1546 (2004). On 10 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 1700 (2006) renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for another 12 months and reaffirming its commitment to assisting the Iraqi people and Government in building a productive and prosperous nation.

The role of the United Nations in supporting and co-chairing the International Compact with Iraq is a key new component of the role of the United Nations which was noted in this resolution. The United Nations now has representatives in its compound in Irbil, and a United Nations military liaison adviser is currently in Kirkuk.

Multinational forces, notably the Georgian, Romanian and South Korean contingents continue to provide security for the United Nations in Baghdad, Basra and Irbil, respectively. These troops provide static site security, reconnaissance, security patrols, convoy escorts, checkpoints, and, when necessary, Medevac and emergency evacuation. In addition, Fijian troops provide static and close-in protection for United Nations personnel and facilities in Baghdad.

In conclusion, the evolution of a fully free, secure and prosperous Iraq remains a work in progress. Training Iraqi security forces to assume primary responsibility for security is essential. Since taking the reins of Government in June, Prime Minister al-Maliki's Government has taken promising steps towards national reconciliation as well as economic development reform and reconstruction through the launch of the International Compact with Iraq. The Multinational Force and the international community stand with the Iraqi people as Prime Minister al-Maliki's Government continues its efforts to promote national dialogue and inclusion and strive tirelessly to deliver improvements in security, stability, and quality of life to the Iraqi people.

Iraq's neighbours share some responsibility for Iraq's internal security. Syria should prevent financial and material support, particularly arms, from entering Iraq. Iran should stop providing munitions and other support to extremist groups in Iraq. Iraq's regional neighbours should do more to help Iraq's democratically elected Government by following through on pledges to provide economic assistance and debt relief.

We applaud the Kingdom of Jordan for having recently sent an ambassador to Baghdad and hope that other Arab States will soon do the same. Moreover, we

renew our call to the entire international community to support Iraq's sovereign Government and redouble its assistance efforts.

The Multinational Force and combined MNF-International Stabilization Force (ISF) efforts continue to support an environment that will allow Iraq's democratically elected Government to succeed and the Iraqi people to realize a brighter, secure and more prosperous future.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first and foremost to thank both Mr. Ashraf Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, and Ambassador John Bolton, Permanent Representative of the United States of America, for their briefings to the Security Council. Allow me also to welcome the presence among us of the Ambassador of Iraq this morning.

Iraq is witnessing considerable progress at the political, constitutional and democratic levels. The first Iraqi Government elected under the new Constitution was formed last June. This represents a culmination of the transitional political process which is in keeping with the transitional administrative law approved by the Security Council in resolution 1546 (2004). However, this progress has been overshadowed by the seriousness of the tense internal situation, a lack of security and widespread violations of human rights due to intensive violence and grave terrorist acts, making it incumbent on the Government, indeed the entire Iraqi people, to make a national dialogue a top priority so as to promote national reconciliation and overcome the intercommunal strife and escalating violence which afflict Iraq and have led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today.

Nearly 3,000 innocent civilians are falling victim to violence every month, and thousands more are wounded. The number of displaced persons this year has so far reached 200,000. As a result, national, regional and international efforts must be mobilized in order to address this priority issue. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of the Iraq reconciliation conference, to be held under the auspices of the League of Arab States and which the United Nations is currently helping to prepare.

We also hope that the national reconciliation plan announced by the Iraqi Government in June will be crowned with success. We are confident that our brothers in Iraq will overcome the obstacles on the road to stability, because that is the best way to set Iraq on an irreversible course towards a future of peace and democracy that allows for the withdrawal of foreign troops.

In addition to promoting a comprehensive, participatory and transparent political process that responds to the aspirations of all communities in Iraq, the current deteriorating security situation must be brought under control so as to enable the Iraqi security forces to take over responsibility for security in the country, a responsibility now being discharged primarily by the Multinational Force.

Ensuring that the basic living conditions of the Iraqi people improve and addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation is no less important than national reconciliation or, indeed, than strengthening security forces to ensure the stability of Iraq.

In that regard, last July the Iraqi Government and the United Nations signed the International Compact with Iraq, headed jointly by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations. The ministerial meeting to be convened by the Secretary-General in New York next week will be an opportunity for the Iraqi Government to set out its economic programme as well as specific frameworks for agreement, which we hope will bolster the Iraqi economy and thereby benefit the Iraqi people. Such an agreement must be as comprehensive as possible so as to ensure constructive and interactive regional and international participation.

In the light of the difficult situation prevailing in Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq has an important and commendable role to play in providing support, advice and electoral assistance. It also provides reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance, as well as assistance in the area of human rights. The Mission is also providing the necessary assistance Iraq needs to enable it to achieve the fundamental goals of resolution 1546 (2004). Finally, let me stress the importance of the unity and cohesion of Iraq.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): I wish to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, for his introduction of the report on United Nations activities in Iraq (S/2006/706). I also thank Ambassador Bolton for his briefing.

My delegation notes that further to the launching of the security plan for Baghdad in June 2006, a second phase was initiated at the beginning of August 2006 with the redeployment of additional troops of the Multinational Force to the capital. In addition, the Government of Iraq made efforts to promote national reconciliation and dialogue through the unveiling of the National Reconciliation Plan which, inter alia, called for a qualified amnesty, the release of detainees and the reform of the legal and judicial systems. We hope that those measures will yield positive results and reduce the level of violence and insecurity that continues to afflict Iraq.

We welcome the launching of the International Compact with Iraq, which should provide an effective framework for Iraq's economic transformation and its integration into the regional and global economy. The Compact must, of necessity, reflect the interconnectedness of political and security developments and Iraq's recovery, which is deemed a prerequisite for sustainable regional investment. The active involvement of the United Nations Development Group, United Nations agencies and other international multinational financial institutions is very commendable; we expect that their guidance and support will make a large contribution to the sustainability of the Compact.

It is our expectation that the meeting of Foreign Ministers on 18 September 2006 to review progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and to engage in a strategy dialogue on the future of Iraq will come off successfully. The meeting should enable the Government of Iraq to present its programme for the reconstruction of the country within the framework of the International Compact and for the United Nations to make concrete proposals for the consolidation of its assistance to Iraq.

My delegation is pleased to note the ongoing efforts by the Office of Constitutional Support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to play a leading role in promoting dialogue and building consensus on the constitution of Iraq. It successfully completed its programme to promote multiparty dialogue, which engaged senior political leaders, technocrats and members of civil society in discussions on critical and relevant issues. Further, we note that it continued to provide advice and assistance to the Government and the Council of Representatives on issues relating to the establishment of the constitutional review committees.

UNAMI's activities in providing the Government of Iraq with guidance in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons as regards shelter and assistance are commendable. We are also gratified to note that UNAMI has, through numerous missions and regular dialogue, helped address the specific needs of communities in various regions and has enhanced coordination and interaction between the provincial and central authorities in meeting reconstruction and development challenges.

We note with concern, however, that United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have heavily depleted the resources earmarked for emergency humanitarian activities. That inadequacy is compounded by the inability of the Government of Iraq to respond effectively to the plight of the rapidly increasing number of internally displaced persons. The request by the Secretary-General for substantial new funding to meet the needs of those persons should therefore be urgently addressed to enable the United Nations to contribute effectively to lessening the suffering of those persons.

The acute human rights and humanitarian crisis in Iraq, characterized by indiscriminate killings, targeted attacks, crime and corruption, is indeed very worrying and of great concern to my delegation. It is apparent that State institutions are unable to protect individuals or address the needs of victims of gross human rights violations, who include women, children and members of ethnic and religious minorities. Indeed, the Secretary-General's report notes that the impact of violence on those vulnerable persons has been particularly alarming.

We acknowledge the work done by UNAMI in the development of a strong human rights system and wish to encourage it to sustain its support for the Iraqi authorities in the drafting of a law for the establishment of a national human rights commission, and also to the Rule of Law Sector Working Group to develop a comprehensive strategy on the rule of law.

We wish to place on record the exemplary work being done in Iraq by the United Nations, whose staff are often exposed to considerable risks. The presence of the United Nations and its ability to operate effectively in Iraq remain constrained, but the Organization has been able to provide assistance to the

Government of Iraq in the several key areas I have mentioned. We hope that UNAMI will soon develop adequate self-reliance mechanisms that will enable it to operate safely and therefore more effectively in Iraq.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Qazi, and Ambassador Bolton of the United States for their briefings. We have carefully read the report submitted by Secretary-General Annan (S/2006/706), which contains comprehensive information and profound analysis. We endorse his observations.

Over the past three years, the Iraqi people have achieved important results in the process of political transition. Within three years, they have held two national elections, formulated a permanent constitution, carried out a constitutional referendum and established a democratically elected Government. That series of achievements has fully demonstrated the Iraqi people's strong aspirations and firm commitment to peace, democracy and prosperity. We hope that the hard-working and courageous Iraqi people can, through their tireless efforts, overcome all of the obstacles in their path and achieve peace and stability at an early date.

As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, Iraq is currently at a critical crossroads and is still faced with formidable political, security and economic challenges. In the political field, the new Iraqi Government should do all it can to continue to enhance the inclusiveness of the political process, promote national reconciliation and appropriately settle outstanding problems concerning the constitution.

We welcome the National Reconciliation Plan promulgated by Prime Minister al-Maliki and hope that Iraq's various sectarian factions and ethnic groups will unite and cooperate with the Government in effectively implementing the Plan, and that they will settle their differences and deepen their common understanding through dialogue. In that respect, we support the initiative of the League of Arab States to convene a conference on Iraqi national accord.

In the area of security, the Iraqi Government and the Multinational Force must try hard to eradicate the root causes of instability. Security and stability represent the biggest challenges now facing the Iraqi Government. They are also fundamental for the future political, economic and social development of Iraq. Military means alone cannot deal with the root ca of the problem. They rather tend to exacerbate vicious cycle of violence and produce more terror instability. We note that the Iraqi Government and Multinational Force have taken some measure improve the security situation. We hope that the Government of Iraq will gradually take responsibility for maintaining security within country, creating an environment that is favourabl the disarmament, demobilization and reintegratio militias and improving law and order so as to win support of the people. In the economic area, the Government must try hard to achieve early result economic reconstruction and to effectively improve living standards of the Iraqi people.

We welcome the International Compact with jointly launched by Iraq and the United Nations. hope that the process will enable Iraq and international community to establish a new kin cooperative partnership. The International Com should be broadly inclusive and should ensure tha parties participate in the economic reconstructio Iraq in an equal and fair manner in order to jointly Iraq resolve its practical difficulties in a construc spirit.

There can be no political and econo reconstruction of Iraq without the support assistance of the international community. appreciate the important role played by the Un Nations in Iraq and we welcome the Secret General's initiative of convening a ministerial mee on the question of Iraq. We hope that that meeting help consolidate the common understanding of international community and speed up the political economic reconstruction of Iraq in a joint effort to Iraq build a better future.

Mr. Biaboroh-Iboro (Congo) (*spoke in Fren*: Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank for having organized today's debate on the situatio Iraq, in the light of recent developments and of activities undertaken by the United Nations Assista Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Fo (MNF). We should also like to extend our thanks Mr. Qazi for his presentation and to the delegation the United States of America, speaking on behalf of MNF.

The security situation in Iraq remains essenti very worrying, in spite of developments in the polit

process in this country, in particular with regard to the establishment of the institutional framework and of the organs that are charged with leading the various institutions. It is true that encouraging initiatives have been undertaken by the constitutionally elected Iraqi Government with the support of Iraq's partners at both regional and international level. My delegation welcomed the complete formation of the Iraqi Government and, in particular, the allocation of key posts in the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and National Security. We also welcomed the launching of the Baghdad security plan which is currently in the second phase of its implementation.

However, and unfortunately, violence and violation of human rights among the Iraqi population remain endemic. Today, Iraq is one of the most dangerous places in the world. Each day brings its share of murders, assassinations, abductions and acts of intercommunity violence. In terms of violence, horror vies with fanaticism to a point where the country is on the brink of a widespread civil war which would, without any doubt, undermine all the efforts undertaken for Iraq's recovery and may well discourage the international community.

That is precisely the aim sought by the proponents of terror and of chaos. At this crucial moment in Iraq's history, the international community must provide itself with the means to support the efforts undertaken by the Iraqi Government to gain control over the situation as a whole, including national reconciliation.

Only national reconciliation, particularly through the seeking of consensus and by way of inclusive dialogue, can offer a way out of this crisis, as no military solution will bring peace or security to Iraq. All the champions of peace and security in Iraq must be fully involved and must engage fully and in good faith in seeking to build national reconciliation and the essential confidence-building measures. To that end, my delegation urges the League of Arab States to convene as soon as possible the proposed conference on Iraqi national reconciliation.

The development and the presentation of the International Compact for Iraq must also contribute towards the restoration of peace and security. That ambitious plan, co-sponsored by the Iraqi Government and by the United Nations, deserves the firm and resolved support of the international community for its implementation. We look forward with interest to the conclusions of the meeting on 18 September, convened to that effect by the Secretary-General.

To conclude, my delegation commends the efforts undertaken by the UNAMI and by the soldiers of the MNF working in a very difficult situation.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank Mr. Ashraf Qazi for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report and Ambassador John Bolton for his briefing on the activities of the Multinational Force (MNF). I should like to make the following comments.

My delegation fully shares the observation of the Secretary-General that Iraq remains at a crossroads. The security situation is of deep concern and the risk of its deterioration cannot be ruled out. But the prospects for an improvement still exist and, in spite of considerable difficulties, it is not too late to get out of the spiral and to chart a course for emergency from the crisis.

The Government of Iraq, whose establishment we welcomed last May, has undertaken significant and commendable efforts, at the political level with the National Reconciliation Plan, at the security level with its plan to re-establish security in Baghdad, in terms of reform, with its resolve to undertake substantial legislative work in parliament and also, now, with the initiative for the International Compact for Iraq.

Still, as I have already indicated, the challenges remain huge. As was noted by the Secretary-General, Iraq has become one of the most violent conflict zones in the world. Intercommunity tensions have risen to a dangerous level to the point of breeding fears of a civil war in the country. The number of civilian casualties has grown considerably — more than 100 per day — almost 6,500 killed in June and July 2006 alone, and the number of displaced persons has also increased substantially.

In this context, France wishes to reiterate its support for the Government of Iraq and for its Prime Minister, and to say once again that we are prepared to develop cooperation with him and to remain at Iraq's side.

We welcome Iraq's will to provide a comprehensive response to the challenges posed and, as the Secretary-General said, there will not just be a single military response to the challenges, but several

types of responses to be found. At first, there will be a political response, which is the purpose of the National Reconciliation Plan launched by the Prime Minister. In that regard, we believe that only a truly inclusive process will help isolate extremist groups and bring back into the political arena those communities that have been excluded from it. I also note the Secretary-General's appeal to undertake a constitutional review process well aware though we are of the difficulty of the exercise.

And then there is the response to the legitimate security needs of Iraqis. There must be an end to the violence that has increased and that my country condemns in the firmest possible fashion. The training of Iraqi security forces remains a priority, as does the handling of the phenomenon of militia which, the Secretary-General's report notes, continues to grow.

My delegation likewise remains convinced that a clear and agreed timeline for the withdrawal of foreign forces is indispensable to allow the Iraqis to persevere in a context of responsibility and sovereignty.

There is also the response to the challenges of reconstruction and the expectations of the population. That is the purpose of the International Compact with Iraq. France, with the European Union, welcomed the launching of that project and expressed our willingness to support it. It was in that spirit that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the meeting of the preparatory group in Abu Dhabi.

But my country also stressed the importance of establishing this project around a number of principles. This process must be conducted by Iraqis and be based on the mobilization of their efforts and their resources, in particular, their natural resources; the political and security conditions necessary for any substantial reform must be created; and this new contract must establish a genuine partnership on the basis of well-identified criteria and the implementation of the principle of conditionality.

Furthermore, there must be the support of the regional and international communities. Any political solution presupposes that the major players involved, particularly among Iraq's neighbours, should be associated in one way or other with the efforts to promote the unity and integrity of that country. In that regard, my delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his willingness to convene a meeting on those items on 18 September.

To conclude, I should like to commend UNAMI for its remarkable work and to recall our support for United Nations action in Iraq, not only at the political level, to support the process of dialogue and national reconciliation and to contribute to full respect for human rights in the country, but also at the economic level, to coordinate international assistance and to promote implementation of the Compact initiative.

The Secretary-General's report usefully recalls both the difficulties and the hopes and outlines the prospects. The priority remains re-establishing an independent, sovereign, pluralistic and united Iraq that is able to find its way back to the path of stability and regain its standing in the community of nations. The international community must continue to play its role of helping Iraq and its leaders move forward in that direction. France intends to do its utmost in support of those efforts.

In that connection, my country expresses the hope that the initiative undertaken by the League of Arab States with the support of the United Nations will soon lead to the convening of a conference on an inter-Iraqi national accord.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I would like to thank Special Representative Qazi for his statement, and Ambassador Bolton for his statement on behalf of the Multinational Force.

As described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/706), the situation in Iraq continues to present challenges to the international community on several fronts. However, we remain convinced that the visions and the political initiative of the new Government, combined with the continued commitment of the international community, will make the International Compact with Iraq a success and will provide the people of Iraq with a fresh start.

The security situation remains very serious in several parts of Iraq. Indeed, the Secretary-General mentions "growing violence and insecurity", particularly in Baghdad and in the southern and western regions. In the Secretary-General's view, the current level of violence is likely to continue for some time. The sectarian nature of much of the violence is a cause for particular concern. In addition, the report describes an acute human rights and humanitarian crisis and State institutions unable to protect individuals from gross human rights violations. The

number of internally displaced Iraqis more than doubled during the reporting period.

Humanitarian needs must be urgently addressed. Human rights must be respected, and the Iraqi Government should give due attention to the situation. Clearly, the influence of sectarian-based militias cannot be curbed by security operations alone. Reconciliation, economic development and a well-functioning independent police force and justice system must form part of the solution.

We welcome the fact that the Iraqi Government is determined to improve the situation through a series of political initiatives, notably the peace and reconciliation plan launched in June. The plan contains the right elements, but implementation remains key. In the national reconciliation process, the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) should play a pivotal role.

We are pleased to see the increasing capabilities among the Iraqi security forces, which made possible the transfer of security responsibility in Al-Muthana province this summer. With stronger and more confident national forces, and with the continued support of the Multinational Force, we hope that the level of violence will decrease and that the main focus will be directed towards the reconstruction of Iraq.

The launch of the Iraq Compact, on 27 July, marks a new departure for international support for the realization of the Iraqi Government's plans for a united, federal and democratic society at peace with its neighbours. Denmark stands ready to contribute to that process.

Denmark intends to maintain its presence in Iraq as long as our support is requested by the Iraqi Government and the United Nations and as long as we believe that our presence is meaningful. This spring, the Danish Parliament decided to extend the mandate of the Danish troops in Iraq until the end of June 2007. Denmark's involvement in Iraq also comprises reconstruction and humanitarian assistance; we have committed approximately $90 million.

As I have mentioned, Denmark supports an expansion of the United Nations role in Iraq. Denmark continues to provide direct support to UNAMI. Effective in mid-November, we have decided to comply with a UNAMI request to deploy a C-130 aircraft suitable for both passengers and cargo.

Iraq is at a critical juncture. The political process mapped out in resolution 1546 (2004) is almost complete, and a broad-based and constitutionally elected Government has been formed. However, many serious challenges remain. With the full backing of the international community, the Iraq Compact will, in the coming weeks and months, provide vital support for the development of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom thanks Special Representative Qazi and Ambassador Bolton for the updates they provided to the Council this morning. It is also a pleasure to welcome the presence of Ambassador Al Bayati at this meeting.

We commend the ongoing work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on the ground in support of the Government and the people of Iraq. The importance of that work across the political, reconstruction and human rights spheres cannot be overstated. As the latest report on UNAMI's activities (S/2006/706) notes, the Iraqi people, through their active participation in two elections, concerning the constitutional process and the constitutional referendum, have made clear their commitment to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

But while there has been impressive political progress, culminating in the formation of a Government of National Unity, there remain serious challenges on the ground. The UNAMI report highlights some of those concerns: cementing national reconciliation, curbing the influence of militias, tackling sectarian violence and terrorism, promoting reconstruction and development and improving human rights.

Tackling the high level of violence and the grave human toll it inflicts must be the top priority. We welcome Prime Minister al-Maliki's Baghdad security plan, implemented in conjunction with the Multinational Force, which is beginning to have an impact on the ground. We also welcome the progress made in training and equipping Iraqi forces, as well as the historic handover of security responsibilities in Al-Muthana and the decision to transfer responsibility in Dhi Qar. We look forward to the Iraqi Government building on that progress, in particular by beginning rapidly to tackle militia issues.

Together with measures to improve security directly, there must be parallel progress on the political, economic and human rights tracks. The United Kingdom welcomes Prime Minister al-Maliki's National Reconciliation Plan, as well as the United Nations contribution in support of it. It is crucial that Iraq's political leaders of all communities should come together to promote stability, security and economic development. It is also crucial that the international community continue and intensify its support for Iraq's Government at this critical juncture. The International Compact provides such a vehicle, allowing the Iraqi Government to set out a compelling vision for the country and permitting the international community to lend concrete assistance in implementing that vision.

We therefore look forward to the high-level meeting to be held in New York on 18 September to help take this work forward. We hope that the Compact in turn will lead to the international community and the region deepening their engagement with Iraq.

We also look forward to the planned Arab League conference in support of Prime Minister al-Maliki's efforts to promote reconciliation. We hope it might be possible for it to take place soon, and so we call on Iraq's neighbours, in particular Syria and Iran, to do more to prevent the flow into Iraq of arms and materiel that promote the insurgency inside Iraq.

Iraq's future is our shared concern. Helping Iraq achieve a stable, democratic and prosperous future is in all our interests.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of my delegation, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, for his presentation and to take this opportunity to convey to him our deep appreciation for his work and that of all the personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, who are working in extremely difficult conditions. I also thank Ambassador Bolton for his presentation on behalf of the Multinational Force.

We regret to note once again that, in spite of the conclusion of the political transition process and the formation of a constitutional Iraqi Government, the security and human rights situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate. There is nothing to indicate that the violence will not continue over forthcoming months, and we believe that there have been serious warnings regarding the risk of a civil war. We are convinced that there are no military solutions to the many challenges facing Iraq and that any strategy aimed at rebuilding and stabilizing the situation in this country must address the root causes of the crisis. The Government of Iraq must work with a sense of urgency to overcome the increasingly apparent divisions among Iraqi ethnic and other groups.

The national reconciliation process is of utmost urgency and priority. In this context, we reiterate our support for the National Reconciliation Plan put forward by Prime Minister al-Maliki. Likewise, we support the initiative of the League of Arab States to convene a conference on Iraqi national accord, which unfortunately has been postponed on several occasions.

We also feel it is essential that the constitutional review process be launched; and in this regard we also have to note that almost four months after the inauguration of the Government there has been no progress. On this point, I would like to ask Mr. Qazi if this delay will affect the time line envisaged in article 137 of the Iraqi constitution. I would like to know his views on the prospects for constitutional reform, in particular taking into account the latest developments in the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

The main victims of violence in Iraq are innocent civilians. As the Secretary-General highlights in his report (S/2006/706), an average of 100 individuals are killed per day, and Iraq has thus become one of the most violent conflict zones in the world.

I would like to reiterate Argentina's serious concern regarding the human rights situation in Iraq. There is evidence of a pattern of generalized violations of human rights throughout the territory of that country. Sectarian violence is an increasing threat to the people of Iraq and has reached alarming levels. Armed militia activity is a cause for particular concern, because it breeds a vicious cycle of attacks, reprisals and revenge, which largely contribute to the current climate of insecurity and fear among the civilian population. The Government of Iraq should take decisive measures to confront this problem and to protect the lives of civilians. It should also foster an environment conducive to the disarming, demobilization and reintegration of all militias.

We recall what we have said on previous occasions: the Multinational Force and the Iraqi security forces bear primary responsibility for fully respecting the provisions of human rights law and of

international humanitarian law. Thousands of detainees are being held without due process, and conditions in many prisons are unacceptable. We expect all these matters to be fully investigated and those responsible for these human rights violations to be brought to justice.

Argentina also welcomes the progress that has been made in developing the International Compact with Iraq, and we hope that this will be formally presented before the end of 2006. We also welcome the Secretary-General's announcement of the conference to take place on 18 September 2006.

To conclude, I would like to underline that, after the conclusion of the transitional process, efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation in Iraq have reached an important juncture. The options are clear: either the solid foundation is established for a democratic, sovereign and unified Iraq at peace with itself, or we may witness the disintegration of the Iraqi State and, possibly, civil war. That would be extremely detrimental not only to the Iraqi people but also to the region and the international community in general. Argentina will continue to support long-term solutions in this respect that will help to prevent the latter scenario from occurring.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Qazi for his briefing and for introducing the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/706). I wish to take this opportunity to commend him in person, and to commend all United Nations staff and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq personnel for the outstanding work they are carrying out in and for Iraq under truly difficult circumstances. I also thank Ambassador Bolton for his report on behalf of the countries that make up the Multinational Force, among them my own country, Slovakia.

As we heard in the briefing, the situation in Iraq remains complex and requires thorough attention, as well as the unconditional support and assistance of the international community. This is crucial, particularly at this critical time when the Iraqi people and their leaders have arrived at an important crossroads that could lead the country either to peace and prosperity or, as a worst case scenario, towards dangerous State breakdown and potential civil war.

During the past three years, the people and the leaders of Iraq have clearly demonstrated their commitment and support to their country's political transition and have made many sacrifices to achieve that goal. As a result, Iraq has successfully met the benchmarks endorsed by resolution 1546 (2004), and the first constitutionally elected Government is now in place, complete and fully operational. Such an historic achievement should not be wasted. We deem as top priorities for the Government of Iraq the further strengthening of democratic institutions; effective implementation of governmental programmes, mainly in the security and human rights areas; and the adoption of concrete measures aimed at addressing the basic needs, concerns and aspirations of all Iraq's communities and constituencies and at the rapid improvement of their welfare and basic living conditions. Such steps towards stabilization are urgently needed in order to foster the further successful transition of Iraq. We remain convinced that a sustained inter-communal and intra-communal dialogue, national reconciliation, constitutional review and implementation of the constitution represent important confidence-building measures that can help Iraq to tackle its many challenges.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General has emphasized in his report that the Iraqi Government must do everything possible to progressively foster an environment conducive to the demobilization, disarming and reintegration of militias. In our view, strong United Nations involvement in Iraq's transitional process remains instrumental. We therefore welcome the recent initiative of the Government of Iraq to launch the International Compact for a new partnership with the international community, as well as the United Nations decision to provide strong support in developing it.

Along with the European Union, Slovakia expresses its readiness to participate actively and constructively in the process. We also stress the importance of Iraqi ownership of the process of developing the Compact and the broad involvement of the international community and the active participation of neighbours and partners in the region. We also welcome and support the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a meeting of the foreign ministers of relevant parties in New York on 18 September to engage in a strategy dialogue on the future of Iraq.

Regrettably, the level of violence and insecurity continues to rise in many areas of Iraq, and the mounting civilian casualties remain a source of our

constant concern. The tangible improvement of the overall security situation in the country thus remains a key objective.

Similarly, we remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iraq. The effects of the ongoing insurgency, sectarian violence, revenge attacks and militia activities are alarming. We feel that further measures are needed to reinforce the justice and security systems and to develop a robust human rights agenda in order not only to protect the lives of innocent civilians, but also to hold fully accountable those responsible for violent acts. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing efforts of the Government of Iraq to take concrete measures to improve security, such as the Baghdad security plan, as well as Prime Minister Al-Maliki's decision to launch a National Reconciliation Plan.

We also fully support and encourage effective regional engagement between Iraq and its neighbours. We welcome the continuing efforts and progress made by the League of Arab States to convene a conference on Iraqi national accord. Contributing to and promoting durable peace and stability will benefit not only that country, but also its immediate neighbours, as well as the wider region. In that regard, we feel that mainly Iraq's immediate neighbours could and should play a more active role in promoting and supporting its peace and stability, including by preventing the flow of arms into Iraq and also by cutting off support for various militias. We regard their contribution to the success of Iraq's stabilization as instrumental and decisive. Hence, we hope that Iraq will receive from its neighbours the required cooperation and assistance, and we encourage Iraq's neighbours to act in that positive direction, which will ultimately be useful to them as well as to the wider region.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Slovakia remains fully committed to the political and economic transition of Iraq. We are one of the troop-contributing countries to the Multinational Force and we stand ready to assist Iraq in financial and material ways and means as well.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank Mr. Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his quarterly report on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Ambassador Bolton of the United States for the update on the operations of the Multinational Force.

My delegation wishes to commend UNAMI, together with the other United Nations agencies, on their dedicated service in Iraq under very challenging circumstances. We are particularly grateful to the Governments of Japan and Denmark, which have provided much needed logistical support to UNAMI. We are grateful to note that UNAMI and other United Nations agencies have been able to continue to provide and coordinate access and delivery of basic services, including trying to restore public infrastructure and offering much needed assistance to internally displaced persons, whose numbers have been increasing as the violence continues to escalate.

The high level of violence in Iraq is very worrying, as it has affected all sections of the population and resulted in death, damage to property, extreme hardship and suffering. Particularly disturbing to us is the fact that innocent civilians, including women and children, have fallen victim to the attacks. The violence bears all the hallmarks of both terrorism and anarchism. Reports of the police picking up many bodies in Baghdad and its suburbs that have been bound, tortured and shot execution-style are now a daily affair. The urgency of restoring order, especially in Baghdad, cannot be overemphasized. Iraqis are desperate for peace. Every action possible must be taken to help them prevent what is now sectarian strife from degenerating into anarchy and civil war.

We commend the Iraqi security forces, in collaboration with the Multinational Force, for recently launching a major security crackdown in Baghdad that has resulted in a slight decrease in violence. Deliberate and determined efforts must continue in order to free the country from the armed gangs and militias that are roaming around, terrorizing, kidnapping and killing innocent people.

There is an urgent need to stand up to and eradicate the extreme violence in Iraq and to replace it with democracy, liberty and the rule of law. That will require sustained engagement by the security forces. We must also pay tribute to the resilience of the Iraqi people and to the manner in which they are bearing their current trials and tribulations.

As for the Government of Iraq, it has to continue to demonstrate that it is effective, and it must be applauded for some of its valiant performances on the

security front. We also welcome and encourage the political efforts that Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki has been making in the search for peace in Iraq, including paying visits to neighbouring countries to seek their support. Of particular significance was his very recent visit to Iran, which ended in important pronouncements on and commitments to good-neighbourliness and peace. On the domestic front, the need for national reconciliation through inclusive dialogue cannot be overemphasized. It is the linchpin of a political solution and future stability.

The preparatory work for the International Compact for Iraq, under the auspices of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, is timely and deserves full support from funding institutions and donor countries. In spite of its economic focus, the Iraq Compact may turn out to be an effective engine for the restoration of peace and stability in the country. The restoration of Iraq's war-torn and shattered infrastructure will require an enabling environment addressing the underlying causes of violence, insecurity and gross violations of human rights.

Prime Minister Al-Maliki's National Reconciliation Plan also deserves support. There is a need for genuine efforts at consensus-building among the many diverse communities in the country. An Iraqi-led initiative can make an important contribution to the Plan and has the potential to make it a real success. Care must be taken to fully involve community and religious leaders in promoting reconciliation.

We appreciate the support that the Multinational Force is providing to the United Nations in Iraq through the provision of military advisers, guard forces and movement and aviation support. We also commend the efforts of the Arab countries, which have been organizing vital meetings aimed at restoring peace and development in Iraq.

Iraq continues to face formidable political, security and economic challenges at a time of new political and security crises in the region, which invariably have a negative impact on the internal situation in Iraq. It is necessary for the building of security forces that they continue to receive outside assistance until they are ready to take full control of the security of their country. Iraq shall also continue to rely heavily on varied forms of support from the international community. We urge generous and timely support from all those in a position to assist the war-ravaged country.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/706) on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which provides a detailed analysis of the situation in Iraq and the complex highs and lows of the Iraqi political process at the current stage. We fully share the assessments and conclusions of the Secretary-General.

I should also like to thank Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for the briefing he has given us clarifying events in the country. We should also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Bolton for his report on the security situation in Iraq.

The process of transforming Iraq is indeed very complex and is being pursued against a backdrop of continuous violence, extremist attacks and a lack of consensus in society on most key issues of significance there. We support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to normalize the situation. Along with the Secretary-General, we therefore welcome such actions on the part of the Government of Iraq as the peace initiative for Baghdad and the National Reconciliation Plan proposed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, both of which are designed to ensure the unity of Iraqi society.

We are closely following the discussion in Iraq on federalizing the country. It is our view that Iraq can select the form of government that meets the interests of its multi-ethnic people, including a federal State.

Another important issue is the foreign military presence in the territory of Iraq. We are convinced that that presence must not be permanent or indefinite. In the end, all foreign troops must completely leave Iraqi territory and transfer responsibility for events there to the national army and the police.

Combating terrorism in Iraq solely through the use of force is short-sighted. A much more realistic approach is to achieve national consensus and reconciliation through a broad-based political dialogue. We welcome the assistance that the United Nations is providing in that regard to political factions in the country. We believe it is necessary to continue to have the most active participation of the United Nations and UNAMI in the Iraqi political process.

With regard to the International Compact, in principle we agree with the relevant provisions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on that matter. We believe the Compact should serve the long-term work of economic recovery and rehabilitation of an independent Iraq.

Mr. Gallardo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his presentation. We also thank Ambassador John Bolton, Permanent Representative of the United States, for his report on the Multinational Force.

Security and instability problems continue to be fundamental issues for the new Iraqi Government. The Government's recent decisions and plans to expand dialogue and encourage reconciliation are positive steps. We hope that they will be effective in addressing the current challenges in Iraq.

We support efforts conducive to the restoration of trust among all groups in Iraq, whether domestic initiatives or efforts by organizations such as the League of Arab States, including those that may be made by the Organization of the Islamic Conference. All such initiatives can contribute to an inclusive dialogue, help to reduce internal tensions in Iraq and strengthen national reconciliation. Cooperation among neighbouring countries to improve Iraq's stability is also important.

With regard to the security situation, Peru rejects all terrorist attacks carried out in Iraq. We also condemn sectarian violence and acts of intolerance. We are confident that the Government of Iraq can make progress in implementing policies that will strengthen the central control of the public authorities and provide security and protection for all its citizens. In that connection, we believe that those responsible for security in Iraq must carry out their duties by protecting civilians and respecting the rule of law and human rights. We also hope to see the speedy establishment of such institutions as a national human rights commission, which will help to strengthen the rule of law and the judicial system.

The task of rebuilding Iraq is another core challenge for the Iraqi Government. The international community must continue its support and efforts to achieve substantial progress in Iraq's economic recovery and reintegration into the global economy. In that connection, there is no doubt that the Compact with Iraq is the most solid initiative to that end.

Finally, my delegation would like to express its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We believe that UNAMI must continue to provide support — in accordance with its mandates and as the situation on the ground permits — in all areas that can contribute to strengthening political and legal stability and institutional and economic recovery, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance and promote the observance of human rights in Iraq.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I join others in thanking Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and Mr. John Bolton for their informative briefings on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Force (MNF), respectively.

Over the past several months, we have witnessed serious developments and crises in the Middle East, including in Lebanon and Gaza. However, those challenges in no way diminish the importance of Iraq for the overall stability of the region and beyond.

Iraq has completed the political process prescribed in resolution 1546 (2004). It is our hope that Iraq will continue on the path towards a free, democratic and stable State promoting national reconciliation and development as a prosperous and responsible member of the international community under a democratically elected Government.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Government and people are confronted daily with mounting complex internal challenges in achieving national reconciliation, ensuring security in communities and promoting the country's reconstruction and development. Of particularly serious concern is the continuing widespread violence, sectarian and inter-communal tensions and clashes and terrorist attacks and insurgency, with many civilian and other killings and casualties compounding instability and causing large-scale displacement of people. As Iraqi society undergoes such a severe and difficult phase, and while acknowledging the importance of respecting ownership of the process by the Iraqi people themselves in establishing responsible governance in the pursuit of its new nation-building, the broader international community must also continue to provide the necessary support, in partnership with the Iraqi Government and people, to assist them in their efforts. In that regard, we

welcome the ministerial-level meeting on Iraq to be held on 18 September under the auspices of the United Nations.

Japan commends the important role that UNAMI has been playing in the Iraq process in the current challenging circumstances and expresses once again its strong support for the Mission's activities.

In the current situation, we place importance on three areas of UNAMI's activities, based on its mandate: first, the promotion of national dialogue; secondly, assistance in the constitutional and electoral processes; and, thirdly, facilitation of coordination and delivery of reconstruction and development assistance. We believe that combined efforts in those three areas will help promote national reconciliation and improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people, which, in turn, will lead to a de-escalation of tensions in society.

Political stability and an improvement in security are prerequisites for economic reconstruction, and these elements are closely interlinked. We therefore appreciate the efforts made by the Iraqi Government to promote the national reconciliation plan and the Baghdad security plan. We welcome the fact that Iraqi forces are gradually assuming responsibility for security in substantial areas of the country thanks to the progress being made in the training of the Iraqi security forces by the Multinational Force. Furthermore, Japan appreciates the growing ability of those two forces to work together to ensure security in the country.

We welcome the fact that the Iraqi Government played a lead role in convening the conference on national reconciliation in Baghdad, recognizing the need for regional support to achieve peace and stability in the country. We welcome also the initiative and efforts of the Arab League for the convening of a conference on Iraqi national accord.

In addition, we welcome, as another positive step, the visit of Prime Minister Al-Maliki of Iraq to some of the neighbouring countries, namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Iran, with a view to ensuring good-neighbourliness and stability in the country and the region.

Japan fully supports the International Compact with Iraq. We support the strong role that the United Nations, through UNAMI, has been playing as co-chair of the Compact process. Japan hopes that the Compact will be finalized and adopted by the end of this year.

After determining that the expected goals had been achieved, with the formation of the new Government in Iraq, Japan concluded its humanitarian and reconstruction support activities through the deployment of its Self-Defence Force contingents as part of the Multinational Force. Japan, however, maintains its commitment and engagement to provide the needed support in Iraq, mainly in the following three areas.

The first area is airlift support activities through Japan's air Self-Defence Force assets, for the benefit of the United Nations and the Multinational Force. We are pleased to report that the airlift services for the transportation of United Nations personnel and cargo began recently, and we hope that it will be useful in supporting the expansion of UNAMI's presence and its activities inside Iraq.

The second area is support for Iraqi reconstruction. To date, various projects worth $1.5 billion in grant aid have been completed, mainly for reconstruction of basic infrastructure and improvement of security. Additional aid of up to $3.5 billion through a soft loan window, largely for further improvement of infrastructure and other economic and social projects, is in the pipeline for steady implementation.

The third and final area involves engagement in the Iraq Compact. We believe that the success of this process requires the following three elements: first, that the Iraqi Government should assume full ownership of the process and clearly articulate its national vision; secondly, major donors and regional partners should be fully engaged in the Compact, so that the broader international community can assist Iraq effectively and in close partnership and coordination; and, thirdly, a framework should be established under the Compact that will set tangible goals towards political and economic stability.

To that end, Japan will continue to actively and continuously engage itself in the Compact process, in cooperation with the United Nations and other parties.

Japan's policy on support and assistance to Iraq was conveyed recently to Prime Minister Al-Maliki and Foreign Minister Zebari by Foreign Minister Aso during his visit to Baghdad last month.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Japan stands ready to continue to work with the people and the Government of Iraq and the rest of the international community so that Iraq can overcome its present difficulties and make strides towards becoming a democratic and stable State.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Greece.

I, too, would like to thank Mr. Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Iraq and for presenting the Secretary-General's latest report on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I should like also to thank Ambassador John Bolton for having provided us with an update on the activities of the Multinational Force in Iraq.

The Secretary-General's report and Ambassador Qazi's briefing are a stark reminder that a great deal remains to be done in Iraq. Indeed, we see that the significant achievements of the political transition process have not yet been translated into an improved security and human rights situation. The levels of violence in Iraq and their devastating toll on the civilian population is cause for alarm.

The Government of Iraq, with the help of the international community and with the constructive support of its neighbours, should do all it can to address the needs of the Iraqi people, in terms of both living conditions and also, and more importantly, of safeguarding their security and fundamental human rights.

We fully support the tremendous work that is being done by Ambassador Qazi and by the United Nations in Iraq and are aware of the very difficult circumstances within which they are operating. We agree with many of the observations contained in the Secretary-General's report and concur with the recommendations contained therein regarding the role of the United Nations in Iraq.

Greece will continue to support Iraq's efforts, both bilaterally and through the European Union, and will work towards the establishment of a peaceful, stable, democratic, pluralist and unified Iraq in which there is full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, for his presentation and Ambassador Bolton for his report on behalf of the Multinational Force. I thank also the members of the Council for their statements regarding the situation in Iraq.

At the outset, allow me to express the appreciation of the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people for the efforts of the United Nations, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in providing humanitarian assistance in the field of development and reconstruction. We value the important role of UNAMI and its assistance in promoting the success of the political and constitutional process in Iraq, which ended with the election of a constitutional Government that is to lead Iraq for the next four years.

Based on the important role of UNAMI, the Iraqi Government had requested the extension of its mandate, and on 10 August 2006 the Security Council adopted resolution 1700 (2006), which extended the mandate of UNAMI for another year. The Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people still need the efforts of the Mission, and we look forward to seeing a vital role for UNAMI during the next constitutional review in enhancing the dialogue and national reconciliation and in developing the Iraqi election institutions. That would require an effective presence of the United Nations and an increase in its working staff in Iraq. We continue to believe that the number of United Nations staff members working in Iraq is too low, despite our understanding of the reasons underlying the hesitation of the United Nations.

With the full formation of the elected Iraqi Government on 8 June 2006, Iraq has entered a new phase, having achieved a milestone in the political and constitutional process, pursuant to the time frame determined by resolution 1546 (2004). The Iraqi Government has determined that its priority is to confront the enormous challenges in the political, economic and security fields. Due to the fact that those fields are strongly interrelated, it is not possible to focus on one field while overlooking the others. The

Iraqi Government therefore decided without any hesitation to address those fields on equal footing.

In the political field, the Iraqi Government believes that the political process should be comprehensive and should include all components of Iraqi society. The Government announced on 25 June 2006 a National Reconciliation Plan aimed at addressing the most important issues that are preventing the achievement of internal peace. It will secure the integration of the entire Iraqi people and all its entities into the core of the political process. The Government has established the High Committee for National Reconciliation to meet that responsibility and to provide all the requirements necessary for its success.

In the security field, and parallel to the process of national reconciliation, the Iraqi Government has adopted a security plan which aims at securing the capital, Baghdad. Iraqi forces, with the support of the Multinational Force, are responsible for implementing the plan. The past 30 days have witnessed a decrease in the level of violence and crime in comparison to the two months of June and July 2006.

As for development and reconstruction, it is necessary to give more importance to the International Compact with Iraq. The Iraqi Government has requested the support of the United Nations in that regard, because the International Compact is based on a sustainable partnership between the Iraqi Government and the international community in overcoming the challenges that emerged during the political and economic transitional phase.

Iraq expects a commitment from the international community to provide the resources required to address the main priorities. Iraq also requires the support of the international community to rebuild its economy and link it to the regional and international economy. That would assist Iraq in achieving its national perspective during the next five years. According to the Compact, Iraq is committed to combat corruption, to establish an effective and transparent oil sector and to enhance its national institutions. Towards that end, a preparatory group has been established, co-chaired by Iraq and the United Nations, to prepare for a high-level international conference to endorse the partnership and secure its fulfilment. The preparatory group met on 10 September in Abu Dhabi.

The Secretary-General will hold a meeting for the ministers of foreign affairs of the concerned countries on 18 September to review progress in the implementation of resolution 1546 (2004), and to review the development of the International Compact with Iraq. During that meeting, Iraq will present its national perspective within the framework of the International Compact. The Compact will add additional obligations for UNAMI and the agencies operating in Iraq. There is no doubt that the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq and the donors will play a fundamental role in assisting the Government of Iraq to achieve its national perspective.

My Government believes that the International Compact with Iraq provides an opportunity for donor countries to fulfil the commitments which they have taken upon themselves at the Madrid and other conferences. We urge the friendly and brotherly countries that have not yet supported the reconstruction of Iraq to do so through initiatives to support the International Compact with Iraq.

Much has been said lately of Iraq sliding into a civil war. We must admit that Iraq witnessed an increase in violent activities and sectarian tension during the period prior to the launching of the security plan that was adopted by the Iraqi Government. Those criminal acts might have caused a kind of internal displacement, which, in fact, is the objective of the terrorists and the remnants of the previous regime who seek the failure of the building of a new democratic Iraqi State based on good governance and respect for human rights.

The aim of the terrorists is to return to the dictatorship period and to confiscate the freedom of the Iraqi people. However, the Government and the people of Iraq are determined to defeat the terrorists. Those who are familiar with the heritage, social solidarity and interrelated familial ties among the components of Iraqi society will realize that the terrorist objective is not achievable. The Iraqi people have succeeded in recent years in completing the political and constitutional process, despite the difficult circumstances. They will also succeed in their battle for dialogue, national reconciliation and the defeat of the terrorists, and in maintaining their unity.

The report of the Secretary-General before the Council (S/2006/706) refers to the critical crisis in human rights in Iraq, which has also been referred to

by several human rights organizations and the media. The reports have received careful attention from my Government, as well as from the political and religious leadership in Iraq.

Yes, there have been several incidents that prove the violation of human rights in Iraq, but we believe that we should look at them within the context of the security situation as a whole. Those incidents do not indicate, by any means, a systematic violation; rather, they are individual, separate incidents that take place due to the sectarian tension in the country. The Government of Iraq is attempting to put an end to those incidents, investigate the causes and bring the perpetrators to justice. Finally, we have to take into consideration the fact that the political leaders and the Iraqi people in all sectors were victims of grave systematic violations of human rights during the previous regime. That fact would certainly compel the Government to put the issue of the promotion and protection of human rights in Iraq at the top of its priorities.

Let me conclude by saying that, while we commend the role of the United Nations in Iraq through UNAMI and have requested the extension of the Mission's mandate, Iraq is still bound by other mandates, the justification of which no longer exists due to changes in the circumstances that led to their establishment. Here, I refer to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). Thus, we believe, along with many others, including all the members of the Security Council, that the time has come to revisit or review the mandate of UNMOVIC with the objective of ending it fully.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Qazi to respond to comments that have been made.

Mr. Qazi: First of all I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the representatives of countries members of the Security Council and of the Government of Iraq for their very constructive contributions, and for their very encouraging remarks with regard to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

I would like to say that we are at a very critical time. It is always a critical time in Iraq, but right now the possibilities for progress in a challenging environment are there, and we need to avail ourselves of them. It is true that many achievements of the benchmarks of resolution 1546 (2004) — in fact, they were all achieved — have not yet translated into the security situation that we all aspire to achieve. But the newly elected Government, headed by Prime Minister al-Maliki, has indeed taken a number of extremely important initiatives, not least, the National Reconciliation Plan and the decision to launch, in partnership with the United Nations, the International Compact with Iraq.

Those are comprehensive initiatives and it is our privilege to be associated with them — with the National Reconciliation Plan and the individual programmes that comprise it, including the Baghdad peace initiative and the International Compact with Iraq.

The first preparatory group meeting, which took place in Abu Dhabi recently, was a very constructive event. We look forward to the high-level meeting on 18 September, to enable a broader range of participation from countries which were not at Abu Dhabi and whose views will be valued and taken into account.

There is no doubt that the major challenge that confronts Iraq today is the degree of violence which comes from a number of sources — the sectarian violence, insurgency and terrorist violence, and, indeed, organized criminal violence. Collectively, they add up to an extremely challenging environment, to put it mildly, for the average Iraqi in those areas where this violence is particularly acute. I say that because one often loses sight that there are many areas in Iraq which, mercifully, are free from significant levels of violence. Nonetheless, the fact that this violence does affect Baghdad impacts upon the perceptions with respect to Iraq. The United Nations will always be ready to lend support, at the request of the Government of Iraq and with the support of the international community as expressed by the Security Council, and to continue its work.

We are now under the extended mandate which includes responsibilities for the International Compact, looking for the realization of an Iraqi national vision which will entail its transformation and integration into the global and regional economy. The regional countries will have a critically important role here. It is very encouraging to see the emphasis that has been placed on this fact and on the extremely important role that regional countries and organizations like the

League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have to play with respect to future developments in Iraq.

The United Nations was proud to assist the League of Arab States in its preparatory conference in Cairo last November and will continue to associate itself with those efforts.

It remains for me to thank all participants for their constructive comments and advice. I would like also to thank the Government of Iraq for all the assistance that it has extended to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) in order to make our work possible. I would also like to thank all the member countries of the Multinational Force in Iraq, which have also enabled us to do our work in Iraq. We also wish to thank the Governments of Japan and of Denmark, which have assisted us with respect to aircraft, because mobility has been an issue which has hampered us. Their contributions are valued and appreciated and will facilitate our work.

The President: I thank Mr. Qazi for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5524

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5524th meeting

Thursday, 14 September 2006, 12.35 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Athba
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Salaita
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Letter dated 13 September 2006 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/735)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-52161 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Letter dated 13 September 2006 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/735)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Djangoné-Bi (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/736, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to photocopies of a letter dated 13 September 2006 from the Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire addressed to the President of the Security Council, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2006/735.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/2006/736). Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America.

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1708 (2006).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5525

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5525th meeting

Friday, 15 September 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis/Mrs. Papadopoulou	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-52438 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Egeland: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Uganda, where I visited last week.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I visited Kinshasa and then went into the field in Katanga, South Kivu and Ituri. I would like to share three main conclusions from my mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First, the United Nations and the Transitional Government have made a lot of progress, with increased security and successful elections, but we have not been able to make enough of an impact on impunity. Sexual abuse has become a cancer in Congolese society that seems to be out of control. Military and civilian authorities are still virtually unaccountable for crimes against civilians. I told President Kabila and the military and civilian leaders that I met that they had to publicly condemn impunity and act firmly to fire or demote perpetrators. President Kabila replied that the contradictions in the Transitional Government had made the latter difficult for him, but one could act more firmly after the elections.

In South Kivu alone, more than 1,000 women who had been raped have been treated so far this year at the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where I visited. We do not know how many more suffer without treatment in inaccessible parts of the province. I was deeply shocked by the stories of the women who had been abused by the members of the national army — the FARDC — and by militia groups. One woman told me she had been raped repeatedly for more than a week by a group of soldiers who kept her bound so tightly — by hands and by feet — that she had permanently lost the use of her hands. Dr. Mukengere, the heroic director of Panzi Hospital, told me that mutilations often followed the rapes. Those required extensive surgical interventions.

I do not believe that the FARDC is systematically addressing this issue. Although some military prosecutions have occurred, often because of the efforts of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), far too little is being done. This Council and the Member States involved in security sector reform in that country must exert more pressure on the FARDC to end this pattern of abuse and violence against civilians.

Secondly, I am concerned about the impact of FARDC military operations on the civilian population. Since the beginning of the year more than 500,000 people have been newly displaced in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In most cases, the displacements follow a Government army operation against a militia group. Too often, civilians flee because of the fighting and then are victimized by the FARDC, who blame them for supporting the militias. In the Kivus and Ituri, MONUC provides logistical support for those operations. The only long-term security solution in the country is, of course, through one competent national army with the exclusive right to bear arms. Nonetheless, we cannot accept such a huge cost on the civilian population caused by the recent operations to disarm. The MONUC Force Commander has invited the humanitarian community to look at ways to reduce the humanitarian impact of those operations. We accept this offer.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has improved. Compared to my last visit three years ago, there are more humanitarian staff working in more areas, including some areas that were totally inaccessible for years. When we went out to meet with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in remote locations in the bush — Pweto, Lubago and Gety — I was impressed with the work done by United Nations and NGO colleagues, often under very difficult circumstances. However, the humanitarian effort still lacks the resources it requires to meet the overwhelming needs. For example, we do not have money for the food pipeline beyond the next three months. In 2007, we will expand our humanitarian programmes and intensify early recovery efforts to meet the needs of the more than 1.6 million IDPs who returned home in the last year, often with little assistance.

The national disarmament and reintegration programme run by the Commission Nationale de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (CONADER) is not working effectively. In Pweto, in the southwest, I met with a group of Mayi-Mayi who had voluntarily disarmed weeks before. However, CONADER claimed that it no longer had resources to serve them, and MONUC military observers had to take it upon themselves to share their rations to avoid looting by the Mayi-Mayi of the civilian population. Other Mayi-Mayi groups who were ready to come out of the bush have not because they want to be sure they will be taken care of. In Ituri, MONUC has been successful in disarming militia members, but the programmes needed to reintegrate them into civilian life have been insufficient. Unless these problems are quickly fixed, these fighters will return to the life of the gun.

The challenges ahead in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are enormous. It will be a marathon, and we are still only half way. We cannot stop now or we will lose what we have gained. The Council should show its strong commitment to the Democratic Republic by maintaining MONUC's strength and maintaining the pressure on the Government to end impunity and promote the rule of law and good governance. The conclusion of the elections is the beginning of the rebuilding process, not its end. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has seen the worst haemorrhage of human life in this generation. Four million people — six Rwandan genocides — is the death toll of war and preventable disease in the last eight years. We must not fail to stop — once and for all — this tragedy.

Let me turn now to Uganda. The picture in northern Uganda is more promising than it has been in years. We can see improvement on almost every indicator. Since the negotiations between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) began in Juba earlier this year, security has increased dramatically, allowing us to do much more on the humanitarian front. We can now reach 54 of the 102 IDP camps without military escorts, up from 34 in May. I was able to spend a memorable night in a family hut in Opit IDP camp, something no United Nations staff member had been able to do for many years. IDPs in Acholiland are cautiously beginning to move towards their homes. We stopped along the country road to talk with a family who were making bricks for a temporary house two kilometres from their ancestral lands so that they could begin farming again. If peace continued, they planned to finally move home in January.

The number of night commuters has fallen to 10,000, from a high of 40,000 when I reported to you last year. Few of the remaining children are moving because of insecurity now. Most continue to move to the towns every night because of social problems at home related to prolonged displacement, such as domestic violence and overcrowding.

We will use the better security environment to continue to improve the situation in the IDP camps and to prepare for the return of more than 1.5 million people. The Government will need to rapidly increase social services in the north, including the return of teachers, doctors and nurses. The Prime Minister told me that the Government was working on this through the Joint Monitoring Commission and the Government's peace, reconciliation and development plan. The international community must soon make the necessary investments in peace and hold the Government accountable for effective protection of the civilian population and a real reconciliation process.

As the Council is aware, Riek Machar, the Vice-President of the government of South Sudan, has been facilitating talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. On 26 August, the two sides signed a cessation of hostilities agreement. I visited Juba on 11 September to address the humanitarian aspects of a

possible peace agreement. I met with Vice-President Machar and his mediation team, the Government and the LRA delegations, and with the Acholi religious and cultural leaders who are observing the talks. I commended Vice-President Machar for the progress of this African-led peace process and offered increased United Nations support for the South Sudanese mediation efforts.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNICEF already have staff members providing technical support to the mediation team, and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) will dispatch someone over the weekend. Norway has provided financial support for the peace talks through OCHA, and several other European donors have indicated their willingness to also support these efforts. That is critical to keep the process moving forward. The government of South Sudan does not have the resources to support the rapid progress of the talks. In addition, Vice-President Machar asked that the United Nations provide monitors for the cessation of hostilities agreement and assembly areas for LRA fighters, along with monitors from the parties and the African Union. I have transmitted that request to the Secretary-General.

The cessation of hostilities agreement requires the LRA to move to two assembly points in the southern Sudan by 19 September. Those are shown on the map that will be distributed. Reports from the field confirm that LRA units are moving from northern Uganda towards the assembly area at Owiny-Ki-Bul, and from the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo into Ri-Kwangba. An estimated 400 combatants and non-combatants have so far arrived at the two assembly points. Development Support Services reports that most LRA members have now left northern Uganda for the southern Sudan.

The United Nations has already assessed the situation in the two assembly points and is prepared to provide assistance to the women and children with the LRA, whom the parties have agreed can be separated from the LRA fighters. We will also help the surrounding communities. The government of South Sudan has moved some food supplies to the areas. The United Nations country team in Uganda reconfirmed to me that they have the resources necessary to receive ex-combatants and women and children and to begin their reintegration into northern Uganda, when agreed by the parties.

While in Uganda and the southern Sudan, I received several telephone calls from Vincent Otti, the second-in-command in the LRA. He invited me to meet with him at the western assembly point. I told him that I could come only if the LRA made a humanitarian gesture and released some of the women and children it is holding. The LRA has not yet agreed to such a release, but we will continue to press for the quick release of the Sudanese and Ugandan captives.

It is important for the Council to know that the International Criminal Court indictments were the number one subject of discussion with the internally displaced persons in Uganda and the parties and civil society in Juba. All expressed a strong concern that if the indictments were not lifted, they could threaten the progress in these most promising talks ever for northern Uganda. I said I believed that the indictments had been a factor in pushing the LRA into negotiations, that the indictments should not disrupt the talks, and that there could be no impunity for mass murder and crimes against humanity. The parties should look now at the different ways to develop a solution that meets local needs for reconciliation and universal standards of justice and accountability. I believe that this can be done, and that peace and justice can work together. For the Council's information, I have discussed that approach with Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, who repeated that the United Nations should indeed support the peace talks, aiming for the return of women and children, the demobilization of fighters and a solution that makes peace and justice work together.

This is the best chance we have ever had for peace in northern Uganda. We must pursue it to the end. As a woman asked me around the campfire in Opit, "If we cannot find peace now, who will we blame for another 20 years of war?" The Security Council's interest in this issue has been crucial for the progress to date. The Council should show its support for the talks and encourage the Government and the LRA to reach a final agreement as soon as possible. The Council should also express its support for the Government's efforts to develop a recovery plan for the North, while stressing the need for the affected communities to be fully engaged in this process. Finally, the Council should stress the need for a reconciliation process that addresses the root causes of this long and terrible conflict and ensures the future protection of the civilian population.

The President: I thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his thorough update on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda. We certainly would have liked to hear more about other parts of Africa, but I hope we shall have another opportunity to discuss and get insight on the evolving situation in other parts of the continent.

We are delighted to hear that what used to be called the "forgotten emergency" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is finally getting some attention. We urge donors, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to improve the food pipeline and to assist the courageous non-governmental organizations on the ground so that their work can be effective.

We are alarmed by the reports of impunity, especially in the area of sexual violence. It is imperative, as the Democratic Republic of the Congo moves towards elections and a Government elected by the people, that the training of the armed forces be given priority, especially in the area of discipline and relations with the civilian population. It is very disturbing to hear that most of the cases reported have related to the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or elements thereof.

It is of particular importance that, in the eastern part of the country, where the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is effectively involved but some armed groups remain, MONUC undertake closer coordination with the Congolese armed forces to address not only the security area, but the extent to which the confidence of the population can be restored, especially after the elections. As we watch the outcome of the next round of elections, we hope that the Government will take more decisive measures in addressing the issues of discipline, even including the dismissal of armed forces and the disbandment of militias that have been engaged in such atrocities.

We are gratified to hear about the improvements in the situation in northern Uganda. It should be borne in mind that humanitarian action can greatly facilitate the negotiations that are going on in Juba. We appreciate Mr. Egeland's overtures and the contacts that he has already made. In the area of the release of abducted persons, we should continue to be more vigilant, because abductions, especially of young people and women, have been the trademark of the Lord's Resistance Army.

We are particularly concerned, with respect both to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda, that the issue of disarmament and reintegration has not received adequate resources. That may not only entail the danger of militias' returning to arms, but cause continuing insecurity among the population. It is an issue not only of food, but also of sustainable reintegration. We are also mindful of the need for the reintegration of refugees who are returning from neighbouring countries and the internally displaced persons who will need to be resettled. It has often been a problem of resources, and in the integrated appeals that will follow, the humanitarian dimension should be given priority.

As I said earlier, we hope that Mr. Egeland will be able in subsequent discussions to provide a broader survey of the humanitarian situation in the continent — not only in Darfur and the Horn, but also in southern Africa, where there are still countries that are going through humanitarian crises precipitated by several factors, such as in Zimbabwe at the moment.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): I wish to add a word of appreciation for Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland's thought-provoking assessment of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. We welcome the positive developments that he highlighted, but we are also concerned about the remaining obstacles to the extension of relief to displaced persons. Obviously, the achievement of durable peace is the key to the elimination of the humanitarian problems that he has highlighted. It is therefore only right that the Security Council continues to be fully seized of the humanitarian consequences of conflict as an integral part of its mandate.

It is well established that the forced displacement of large segments of populations has become part of the strategy of combatants in furtherance of their military objectives. We need to pay close attention to that. From our perspective, we have to focus closely on the factors that aggravate suffering in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Those factors include restrictions on humanitarian access and the use of aid-dependant civilian populations as hostages and

political bargaining chips. Insofar as such restrictions have potential genocidal effects on displaced populations, there is a need to assign criminal liability to identified offenders in that regard, and to pursue their prosecution as far as practicable. We agree with the Under-Secretary-General that, whatever the outcome of the peace talks in Juba between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government, those liable for International Criminal Court prosecution should meet the fate to be allotted to them.

Secondly, the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers, who are often the main lifelines for IDPs and refugees, also deserves to be given much more serious attention in the international criminal justice system. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of women and children should also not be tolerated. Related to that is the phenomenon of human trafficking, which has been reported to exist in certain camps in other parts of Africa.

The proliferation of small arms in IDP camps — and we have just heard, in the course of the briefing, what the Mayi Mayi have been doing — is also another problem that deserves the Council's attention. Those arms are frequently used to terrorize displaced persons, and they always have the risk of turning camps into staging grounds for bloody armed confrontations, thereby aggravating the humanitarian situation.

There is also the risk of the permanent displacement of IDPs. I have in mind northern Uganda, where a whole generation of people has been born and raised in such camps, with little prospects of return and of being integrated into the wider society. The threat posed by prolonged stays in those camps should not be underestimated. Given the changing dynamics of conflicts on the continent, those camps could be fertile grounds to recruit mercenaries, and even terrorists.

We recognize that not much can be achieved without adequate funding. We commend those countries, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups that continue to be the backbone of the global humanitarian effort, particularly in Africa. Nonetheless, we support the appeal for extra resources so that the agencies and groups on the ground can carry on with the vital work they are doing.

Finally, we believe that the African Union and other subregional groupings bear the primary responsibility to provide humanitarian relief for their own kith and kin. We hope to work with other African countries to explore ways to enhance our contribution to humanitarian relief on the continent.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of Greece for taking the initiative of organizing this meeting. I also wish to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing. It is always with great interest that we listen to him as he explains the situation on the ground.

At the outset, I would like to commend the progress that has been made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The humanitarian response of the United Nations and its partners is today more swift than in was the past. But the improvement made should not lead us to forget reality. The briefing just given to us by Jan Egeland reminds us of the reality that the situation in certain parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has produced one of the most lethal humanitarian crises in world. That continues to be a matter of great concern.

Given the scale of the movement of displaced persons and refugees, I would first like to emphasize the basic principle of the voluntary return of refugees to their countries. That principle must always be very closely monitored.

We are also concerned about the needs of local populations that suffer the burden of large numbers of displaced persons.

The involvement of children in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of particular concern. It is my hope that Congolese authorities, United Nations agencies and the main donors will quickly implement the recommendations just made by the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the work of United Nations agencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as for the United Nations 2006 Action Plan. We urge the Congolese Government to become closely involved in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Of course, we must also strengthen the coordination of international assistance and United Nations programmes, so as to ensure that humanitarian assistance can meet the needs of the entire country.

I also think we should welcome the return of institutional donors to the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, including the European Commission and the World Bank. I am pleased that donors are prepared to reinvest following the transition that has taken place with regard to infrastructure and basic services.

My country welcomes the ceasefire agreement signed on 26 August between the Government of Uganda and the LRA rebellion. That agreement is a first step towards a final resolution of the conflict in Uganda. However, the search for peace should be reconciled with the need not to guarantee impunity, especially for those responsible for the most serious violations of international humanitarian law.

On the humanitarian front, France is dedicated to the social reintegration of child soldiers — especially those unfortunate girls who have been raped — as well as to the provision of psychological assistance.

My delegation welcomes the work done by UNICEF, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ugandan Human Rights Commission in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005).

Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, my delegation is very grateful to you for having included on the agenda of the Security Council an issue of such great concern as the humanitarian situation in Africa. Indeed, this issue is of concern not only to Africans but to the international community as a whole, given that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation is in large part related to the outbreak of conflicts, combined with the consequences of natural disasters, which have occurred in many countries.

My delegation would like also to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his responsiveness and his dedication to his very difficult and hazardous task. I should like once again to assure him of the support and cooperation of our delegation.

On the basis of Mr. Egeland's report, prepared following his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Uganda, we have very mixed feelings. We are happy to hear of the return of many refugees in general and of the long-overdue signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). On that score, we are extremely pleased. However, we cannot remain indifferent to the fact that insecurity and impunity continue to afflict millions of people, who, thus deprived, must rely on humanitarian assistance.

It is true that the signing of the agreement between the Ugandan Government and the LRA is a promising sign for the peoples of the north, who have suffered all sorts of atrocities during the last two decades of war, as well as for stability in the Great Lakes region as a whole. It is intolerable that women and girls continue to be raped and that child soldiers continue to be recruited.

Despite of the progress made in humanitarian terms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Uganda, enormous challenges remain, because not all factors of instability have been eliminated. For that reason, my delegation believes that there is a need to ensure the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement and the peace process that is under way, which represents an excellent opportunity to put an end to 20 years of war in northern Uganda.

There is a need also to accelerate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and to put an end to impunity with regard to the perpetrators of serious violations of human rights, through existing mechanisms. It is vital also to call on all parties, wherever necessary, to recognize the neutrality of humanitarian personnel and to ensure their security. It is also imperative to encourage the international community to continue its efforts on behalf of humanitarian assistance in Africa by mobilizing greater resources so as to address these enormous challenges.

Finally, I should like to reiterate once again my delegation's commitment to the implementation of resolution 1625 (2005) relating to the prevention and settlement of conflicts, without which international peace and security will continue to be threatened and humanitarian problems, which we deplore, will remain acute.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I should like to begin by joining others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his comprehensive briefing.

Given their gravity and serious implications, the humanitarian crises of Africa merit more of our attention and of our political and financial resources. Violent conflicts, food shortages and governance crises are some of the most widespread causes. The powers of

nature — floods and droughts — account for only a fraction of these. Most humanitarian crises are manmade, and it is fair to say that if we have the collective will, all those causes and all those humanitarian crises highlighted by Mr. Egeland can be influenced and corrected through concerted action by all parties involved.

Let me take this opportunity to comment on the situations in the Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the recent positive developments with regard to the situation in northern Uganda. I would like also to underline the fact that the humanitarian situation in a number of other countries in Africa — Zimbabwe being one of them — also requires the close attention of the international community.

The situation in the Sudan continues to top the agenda of the Council. While the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan remains stable and has led to some optimism, we are all too aware of the sharp deterioration of the situation in Darfur. Increased fighting, restrictions on humanitarian access and direct targeting of humanitarian workers have pushed the situation to the brink of catastrophe. In the absence of eyes and ears on the ground, when not only aid personnel but also journalists are prohibited from accessing the most vulnerable areas, the rest of the world has reason to be extremely worried.

An immediate strengthening of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) is essential, not only in word but also in deed. A decision on extending the mandate of AMIS will, hopefully, be taken next week, and the resources and additional capacity must follow. They are so desperately needed. At the same time, the joint planning of the transfer of AMIS to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) must continue without delay.

If security in Darfur is allowed to deteriorate even further, we might soon be faced with tens of thousands of refugees crossing into neighbouring countries, with further destabilizing consequences for the entire region. We would also be faced with a scenario not unlike the one we saw in Rwanda in 1994 — a scenario that we have promised ourselves would never be repeated.

With more than 1,000 people dying every day, mainly as a result of the continuing conflict in the east, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is extremely worrying. Only through peace and stability can the humanitarian situation be eased. In order not to lose the present window of opportunity to achieve peace, lasting stability, democracy and sustained economic development, the political actors must first of all respect the electoral process and work constructively to support democratic development.

On a much more positive note, I would like to welcome the cessation of hostilities agreement between Uganda and the rebels, the Lord's Resistance Army. It is a very important step in the right direction, and, as Mr. Egeland has stated, this recent development represents the best hope for sustainable peace in the region in some time.

We urge the parties to agree on a comprehensive settlement which would pave the way for efforts to help improve the deplorable living conditions of the nearly 2 million internally displaced persons in northern Uganda. To secure lasting peace, impunity must be addressed, and I should like to use this opportunity to remind Uganda of its responsibility to find a solution consistent with its obligations under international law.

Zimbabwe is not on the agenda for today's briefing. Nevertheless, I would like to stress our continued concern regarding the humanitarian situation in the country, a situation that, we all know, is extremely serious and is getting worse. A huge and growing number of Zimbabweans are suffering from food insecurity, homelessness and/or the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I would like to ask Mr. Egeland to give his assessment of the present situation in that country and to update us on the cooperation between the United Nations and Zimbabwe.

Finally, let me conclude by commending the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Mr. Egeland for the active advocacy role they continue to play.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. The historic general election in the Democratic Republic has become the most important event in the political life of that country. Thanks to the considerable efforts by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the International Committee

in Support of the Transition (CIAT), as well as all parties in the Democratic Republic, the election is progressing smoothly.

At the same time, we have also noticed that in the eastern part of the country there are still some issues in the humanitarian and human rights fields. We believe the political and security situation is interdependent with the humanitarian situation. On the one hand, a sound political and security situation would aid in ameliorating the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, improvement of the humanitarian situation would promote further progress in the political and security situation.

In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in North and South Kivu, improvement of the humanitarian situation would impact positively on the general election, which must be conducted in an environment of peace, security and stability. It is hoped that before the new Government comes into force, the transitional Government will remain unified in discharging its responsibilities to manage the country, and that it will find a politically practical solution to the humanitarian problem prevailing in the eastern part of the country.

With regard to Uganda, for a long time that Government has been making unremitting efforts to find a solution to the situation in the northern part of the country and calm the tensions existing there. We are heartened to notice that important breakthroughs have been made in the negotiations between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA has agreed to lay down its weapons, repatriate the kidnapped women and children, assemble at designated points and implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It is believed that such an important development will have an important bearing on the situation in the northern part of Uganda as well as on the stability of the country as a whole.

It is hoped that the international community can find an early solution to the issue of the indictment by the International Criminal Court of Kony, the head of the LRA, as that would pave the way for an early solution to the issue of the LRA.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I want to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his informative briefing on the current state of humanitarian affairs across the African continent, and particularly on his recent trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda and southern Sudan. We are grateful to Mr. Egeland for taking on that timely mission.

Let me say at the outset that the United States is encouraged by what appear to be some positive developments in resolving some of the longstanding humanitarian problems in Africa. For example, we would note that the return of refugees and displaced persons in Angola and Liberia is nearly complete, and that the process is also underway in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan.

We also share Mr. Egeland's cautious optimism about the situations in northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recognize that support for peace and reconciliation efforts, as well as for the basic recovery of the social and economic infrastructure in all of those post-conflict situations, will be critical to the sustainable resolution of those protracted crises. We add our hope that external financial support for the recovery of those countries is shared more broadly by a wider donor community, since we all benefit from the peace and security that should result.

The United States is encouraged by the ongoing negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and we are monitoring the results with interest. We urge both parties to continue to work towards a viable ceasefire. In that regard, it is important that the 2007 United Nations Strategy and Consolidated Action Plan address internally displaced person (IDP) returns in Uganda, as well as assistance to IDP camps. While IDPs may well continue to move between camps and their lands for some time, it is important to start laying a foundation for returns now.

The United States, however, is gravely concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur, including the possible new flows of refugees to Chad and weak implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We must find a way to help reach a cessation of hostilities in Darfur, to help provide security for the civilians there and to support a process of dialogue rather than use of arms. We look forward to the outcome of next week's meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, and we reiterate our call on the Government of the Sudan to welcome

deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur.

We deeply regret the recent deaths of humanitarian workers in Darfur. We join others in underscoring the need to support individuals working in some of the most difficult areas of the world for the benefit of those in need.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We too would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his very powerful briefing and very sobering description of the situation developing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda. At the same time, we note encouraging signs of progress in the developments in those two countries.

As we heard in the briefing, there are still many disturbing acts of violence against civilians, as well as acts of gender-based violence, which the international community cannot disregard and must pay greater attention to.

In that regard, we believe that the international community must pay constant attention to implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1674 (2006). We agree with Mr. Egeland that we must not allow impunity in any country or in any region, and we must bring all violators of human rights and perpetrators of acts of violence and human rights abuses to justice.

At the same time, we noted, in connection with the negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda on the cessation of hostilities, that there are some calls for the leaders of the LRA to be guaranteed amnesty or impunity as a condition for accepting the cessation of hostilities. We would like to ask Mr. Egeland a question with regard to how that issue can be addressed: on the one hand, so as not to compromise the principles of impunity, and on the other hand — as Mr. Egeland noted — to use it as the last chance for peace in northern Uganda.

We share Mr. Egeland's view that the constant interest of the Security Council in the issue is crucial to progress in northern Uganda. That is why we would welcome regular briefings by him and by the Secretariat on developments in northern Uganda, as well as on how the Government of Uganda fulfils its commitments to address the grave social, humanitarian and economic situation in northern Uganda, including by the establishment of a sustainable and coherent recovery plan for the north.

Returning to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we share the opinion of Mr. Egeland that it is of the utmost importance to address the problem of violence committed against women and other grave violations of human rights perpetrated by the Congolese armed forces and militias. We think that effectively addressing this problem is one of the prerequisites for sustainable peace consolidation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

That is why we believe that additional efforts and resources are needed to speed up the process of security-sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Again, we think that a comprehensive action plan should be elaborated based on full compliance with and implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1674 (2006), with special attention given to the situation in the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, we would like to underline the necessity of paying equal attention to all regions in Africa and trying to do everything possible to prevent humanitarian crises like those we have witnessed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda and to avert the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding in Darfur. In this respect, we are also concerned about the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the social and living conditions in Zimbabwe, which we are afraid might lead to an internal conflict similar to those we have witnessed in other parts of Africa. In this connection, we would like to ask Mr. Egeland whether he thinks that it is possible for the international community to act to prevent these situations from turning into violent conflicts.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, we would like to thank you and your delegation for convening this meeting. We would also like to welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, and to congratulate him once more for his active efforts on behalf of civilian populations, especially the most vulnerable sectors. We are happy to have him once again with us. We attach great importance to the information that he regularly provides to the Security Council.

With regard to his statement today, we take note of the positive tone of some of his comments on his recent visit to Africa, in particular his cautious optimism with regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in northern Uganda. We know that that region has been the epicentre of the worst humanitarian tragedies that our generation has experienced. We trust that both countries will be able to start to follow a path that will take them to democratic normalcy after so much suffering and so many mistakes. However, we are still concerned, in particular, about the issue of sexual violence and we think that urgent steps need to be taken on that problem.

On another issue, the situation in Darfur, as we know and as the Council knows in depth, continues to be an urgent one. We cannot add much more to what we have recently heard from Mr. Egeland. Almost 3 million people in the region, without counting those in Chad, could be deprived of humanitarian assistance to enable them to survive, due to the re-escalation of violence in recent months. In this context, we would like to repeat that it is absolutely imperative to implement the provisions of resolution 1706 (2006) without further delay.

With regard to the Juba peace process and the slow progress that has been achieved, we think that it is necessary once again to support this process and invest in peace and reconciliation so as finally to put an end to this long and painful conflict that has afflicted the Acholi people for so many years. In this context, we think that one cannot negotiate impunity for the perpetrators of so much suffering for the civilian population. So that there can be peace, there needs to be accountability for those who have carried out massive violations of human rights. The Government of Uganda has voluntarily submitted the situation to the International Criminal Court, and we believe that the process, once initiated, should not stop. We support the actions of the Court, and we agree with Mr. Egeland that the international community, and in particular the mediators that are assisting in the Juba process, should seek innovative solutions that will harmonize the traditional systems which are common in reconciliation among the local civilian population with the requirements of international law. Once again, we state that peace cannot be achieved at the price of justice.

Finally, my delegation would like to state its condemnation of attacks on humanitarian personnel, in particular, the death of 12 humanitarian workers in the last two months in Darfur, and the constant physical aggression and harassment to which they are subject and that the Secretary-General has so vividly described in recent days. Attacking humanitarian personnel or preventing their activities not only violates fundamental principles of humanitarian law but it also imperils the means of survival of the 3 million people dependent on humanitarian aid. It is urgent for the violence to cease. The international community cannot allow innocent civilians to continue to die in the name of the right to self-defence.

To conclude, we would like to state our appreciation for Mr. Egeland's efforts in seeking to improve the situation of civilian populations. We value his commitment and we reaffirm that Argentina supports him in his daily task of protecting civilians in armed conflict.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his timely and informative briefing on his recent visit to the Central African region. We pay tribute to the Emergency Relief Coordinator for his unstinting efforts to address humanitarian crises in Africa and elsewhere, and particularly for his initiatives and efforts to highlight forgotten or neglected humanitarian crises.

We welcome some positive developments that have taken place recently in conflict zones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. But we must note that these moves toward settlement of conflict, though much welcomed, are very fragile. Therefore, sustained support is needed from the international community to make them stick and to address the humanitarian concerns and needs of the many affected people, including refugees and internally displaced persons, and in particular, to address the plight of the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, namely, women and children.

The agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, the result of the facilitation efforts of the government authorities of South Sudan, is certainly a welcome positive step. With that agreement in place, it is now important to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and is respected by the parties, and that the favourable momentum that has been created

leads to further steps being taken for a peace agreement and a lasting resolution of the conflict.

It is also important that the next steps should continue to be led by Africans through the process that they have set in motion. But the international community must provide generous and sustained support, too. As refugees have already begun to return from their camps, the Joint Monitoring Committee, established in May this year, needs to accelerate its efforts to help implement the emergency humanitarian action plan. In this regard, we expect the United Nations, as a critical member of the Joint Monitoring Committee, to play its role effectively.

The question of impunity must also receive due attention. Impunity must end, and those responsible for crimes and offences against the civilian population must be brought to justice. At the same time, in any conflict resolution process, promoting reconciliation among warring parties is often a sensitive matter, and as such the right balance needs to be struck, so that, in the words of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, peace and justice work together.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are gratified to note the important progress that has been made in the political process, allowing the much-needed humanitarian space to increase. Here, too, as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees begin to return, the process needs to be supported and managed carefully so that tensions and instability are kept to a minimum. We therefore support the observation of the Emergency Relief Coordinator that the improvement of the humanitarian situation for the affected people must be pursued in tandem with the political process. A similar transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction is therefore indispensable.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the situation in southern Sudan. Concerns have been expressed about the recent resurgence of the activities of the so-called other armed groups. Frequent conflict between such groups and the Sudan People's Liberation Army is having a negative impact on the security situation there. Reaching an agreement among stakeholders is therefore critically important so that efforts can continue towards the consolidation of peace — specifically, the further return of refugees and IDPs after the rainy season, the progress of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and other objectives in the context of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I would be happy to hear Mr. Egeland's views on the situation in southern Sudan.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I too would like to thank Jan Egeland for his briefing. I pay tribute to him for truly being our collective conscience and for doing so much to bring relief to all of the crises and disasters that he deals with.

I would like to start with the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo — an electoral process on a knife edge and unacceptable violence from 20 to 22 August between security forces loyal to President Kabila and those loyal to Vice President Bemba. Those second-round candidates owe it to the Congolese people to restate their commitment to the peace process and to resolve the political differences between them by peaceful means. After the election, it will be incumbent on all political parties to act responsibly within the framework of the new institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Given the massive investment that the Council and the United Nations have made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we will have to be ready to make very clear our condemnation of any violence and to make absolutely certain, to the extent that we can, that the democratic process comes out of this and makes progress.

We share the alarm expressed by Jan Egeland about the widespread and serious nature of the sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is not just a human rights concern; it has a long-term impact on peace and security. There is a moral imperative to ensure that there is no impunity for the perpetrators. There are also pragmatic reasons, because ending impunity contributes to a sustainable peace. That is why the efforts by the Congolese authorities — and we would like to see more of them — and the zero-tolerance approach of the Secretary-General are crucial in tackling those abuses. We should be clear that no one can be exempt from punishment for such crimes.

But our efforts will come to nothing if the scale of need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains as immense as it is today and if we fail to respond to it. We need a greater response delivery that is coordinated, and we need to make sure that we do

not spoil what has been achieved by being unable to see it through.

Turning to the situation on the ground in Uganda, which changes by the day, I welcome very much, speaking from a British viewpoint, the steps now being taken by the Ugandan Government. We have long believed that there could never be a purely military solution to the conflict in the north. We therefore very much welcome the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan Government.

There is no question that there is a long way to go before we actually get a comprehensive negotiated settlement. But such unease as I had about the process in Juba was, I have to say, partly assuaged by the fact that Ian Egeland himself was actually in Juba talking to people. Despite the progress being made, however, 1.7 million people are still living in extremely difficult conditions in camps for internally displaced persons, and that has to be a major concern.

I hope that the arrangements being put in place by the Government in Kampala, and the measures which will flow out to northern Uganda through the Joint Monitoring Committee, will, in a mix of cooperation between the Government, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations family and those countries that are trying to help the process, ensure progress and actually keep up the pressure for sustained movement. The Government of Uganda has reacted well in recent months. It deserves our support so that it can see through what it is trying to do.

Ending conflict, ensuring stability and demobilizing and demilitarizing the fighters must be the priorities. I think that we all have to recognize that reintegration and reconciliation will be very, very difficult. But in addition, an essential part of a better future will be the establishment of the rule of law and the delivery of justice — justice which ensures stability, progress and reconciliation and which will inevitably require an end to impunity for those who have committed the gravest of crimes against humanity. But there is a sequence which we should sensibly follow.

There are, of course, many situations of humanitarian concern in Africa which merit our attention, and we have addressed only some of them this morning. Darfur has been referred to. Let me stress the need to actually implement resolution 1706 (2006), to get the mandate of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) extended and ensure that the Mission is reinforced, and to make sure that we are taking all the steps that we should take to deliver security in Chad, expecting that we may have to face an influx of more refugees into Chad — and we look forward to proposals from the Secretary-General in that respect — and that all of us maximize the pressure on the Government in Khartoum to actually accept a United Nations force to replace AMIS.

Looking beyond Chad, one of the situations that a number of colleagues have referred to and which I, too, want to pick up on, is the situation in Zimbabwe. Mr. Egeland briefed the Council on this following his mission in December (see S/PV.5331). It would be very helpful to have an update on how he now sees it, and some thoughts about what all of us in the United Nations family can do to try and ameliorate what is an increasingly grim situation.

As I understand it, more than one year after Operation Murambatsvina, displacements continue, and almost none of the victims of that operation have benefited from the so-called programme of re-housing. But the issue is not just re-housing. There is a severe food shortage, which is not just down to the drought. This is the fifth year in succession that there has been such a shortage. Inflation is running in excess of 1,200 per cent. and the blatant and continuing disregard for human rights is there for all to see.

That is not just a domestic crisis for Zimbabwe; it is resulting in migration flows, placing enormous burdens on neighbouring countries and producing inherent instability. So it would be very helpful if the Under-Secretary-General could give us his perception of the scale of the difficulties and how we can help the people of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his comprehensive briefing on his trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Uganda. The humanitarian situation in those States continues to be very complex and requires continued comprehensive international cooperation. Major changes in the humanitarian situation in those countries and in other countries on the continent can take place only with the effective long-term settlement of the conflicts with the help of the United Nations, the

African Union, African subregional organizations and other interested parties.

A successful solution to humanitarian problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons, will depend to a significant extent on the peace process going forward, and in particular on the effective implementation of the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

With the help of the United Nations and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese parties must continue to work towards a political settlement, in particular within the context of preparations for the important second round of elections. Of course, responsibility regarding the humanitarian crimes that have been committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as in other conflict zones in Africa, remains an important element of any long-term comprehensive settlement.

The signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, with the facilitation of the government of South Sudan, offers prospects for a final settlement of the conflict in the northern part of the country and for an easing of the situation of the population in that region. We need full and strict compliance with this agreement, and the situation in that country must be permanently stabilized. We view as a step in the right direction the Government of Uganda's plan for a gradual easing of the humanitarian situation in the north of the country. At this crucial point for reaching a settlement, the international community must provide wide-ranging support and encouragement, including financial support, so that the comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of northern Uganda can be carried out successfully.

We trust that, as they gather momentum, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund will help improve the humanitarian situation in Africa and promote the successful rehabilitation of African States recovering from conflict. The Russian Federation, for its part, will continue to do everything possible to promote the solutions to these challenges.

Ms. Tincopa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We, too, would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his update on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Cong in Uganda. We are happy that there have been improvements in those countries. In that conne we welcome the agreement signed betwee Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resi Army.

Although there has been major progress, I b that the challenges are even greater. In this con would like to point to some elements that the Se Council and the international community ne continue to work on. The first is the humani situation. In the Democratic Republic of the Cong example, the situation remains critical. Although has been some progress, and although there have efforts in establishing democratic institutions a holding elections, the task is far broader than th our view, that task needs to go hand in hand economic progress. The social development o country is of great importance, as is respect for th of law.

The second element is the issue of impunit consider that the Security Council and all p concerned need to continue to work to end imp We support the International Criminal Court play significant role in seeking reconciliation punishment for those who violate human right believe that there can be no reconciliation if thos are responsible go unpunished and if due attent not paid to the victims of these crimes.

Another situation relates to violence again civilian population. The Security Council nee continue to work to protect civilians and to e respect for and guarantees of their human r Violence against women is unacceptable; I think the Security Council must send a very clear me about putting an end to this practice, whi becoming habitual in some African cou Governments need to be responsible for taking to put an end to this practice.

Yet another issue is that of internally disp persons. Assistance to these people must continue a priority. We all realize the difficult situatio internally displaced persons in Darfur, in Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Uganda a Chad. In this context, we want to stress the impor of speedy implementation of resolution 1706 (for internally displaced persons in Darfur and in C

With regard to the financial situation, we believe that the international community needs to continue to provide additional resources and seek intelligent ways and means to obtain financial assistance. Without such assistance, populations in these African countries will continue to suffer, and many more human lives will be lost.

I have a question for Mr. Egeland on the process for the forthcoming second round of elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Is there any indication that this might lead to a resurgence of violence or a deterioration of the security situation? Is there a plan to prevent any aggravation of the humanitarian crisis? Have discussions been held with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or has Mr. Egeland's Office undertaken a programme to prevent that potential situation?

Mr. Al-Qahtani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing, which we followed attentively.

It is very sad to note today that the rape of women has become a spreading cancer in the society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is sad indeed that those who commit such crimes do so with impunity. I ask myself: Why do we forget that crisis, only to focus on others? Where have we been while the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated so drastically? Clearly, the situation in that country requires surgery to remove the spreading cancer. We therefore agree with Mr. Egeland that the Council should do everything in its power to end impunity and fully to apply criminal justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

History proves that national dialogue and reconciliation represent the best hope for peace in conflict situations, as borne out by recent developments in Uganda. We must therefore continue to support efforts for peace in northern Uganda. In that regard, we again agree with Mr. Egeland that the Council must help the Government of Uganda to settle the problem in the North and to promote reconciliation and national dialogue to address the root causes of that problem in order to save innocent lives.

The main thrust of the statements made by Mr. Egeland and representatives today is that the best hope for achieving peace in Darfur lies not in transferring authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, but in calling on the rebel movements to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement, to enhance national reconciliation and dialogue in Darfur, and to strengthen the legal and judicial systems in order to bring to justice all those who have violated international humanitarian law and to pay the necessary compensation to the victims of the violence there, in accordance with the applicable legal and judicial framework.

We reiterate our hope that such an approach and such a philosophy will be applied to all the struggles in Africa, not just that in Darfur.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Greece.

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Egeland, for today's very interesting briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda and other areas.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although still fragile, gives us reason to be optimistic about an overall improvement of the situation as soon as a democratically elected Government is in place. In the meantime, violence still poses an ongoing threat to untold numbers of Congolese, including the sexual abuse of women, particularly in the strife-torn eastern provinces, while in Katanga the problem of 150,000 internally displaced persons persists.

We should commend the efforts of the United Nations humanitarian agencies working in the field — engaging in a humanitarian marathon, I would say — and, as Mr. Egeland said, saving lives on a daily basis, despite the dire conditions in which they work.

There is also hope for a political settlement in northern Uganda following the Juba agreement with the Lord's Resistance Army. The 20-year conflict has caused immense suffering, with thousands of victims and 2 million people displaced. Everybody has understood that no military solution could be applied. Only the success of the peace process can create the sense of security necessary for the safe return of the internally displaced persons and the rebuilding of the Acholi and Ugandan societies. We should do our utmost to support it. Regional actors and the international community should spare no effort to ensure that resources are adequately allocated to

northern Uganda, including for humanitarian assistance and the sustainable reintegration of the conflict-affected population.

As far as the Sudan and, more particularly, Darfur are concerned, in 2003 we had the largest operation in the world, which was extremely effective. Now, unfortunately, it is at the brink of total collapse, touching what some have called the Rwandan threshold. Indicatively, during the past few weeks, the number of gross violations of human rights, including rape, has risen dramatically. The number of internally displaced persons has risen by 50,000, while humanitarian access has been severely restricted due to the fact that humanitarian workers are being targeted. In July alone, nine humanitarian workers were killed.

In that context, we believe strongly that the only way to improve the situation is if we all work collectively to implement resolution 1706 (2006) and to uphold the Darfur Peace Agreement. As we have said before, there cannot be any military solution to the Darfur crisis.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Egeland to respond to the comments and questions raised.

Mr. Egeland: I offer warm thanks to all members of the Council for their encouraging comments, advice and questions.

Indeed, as I have come to brief the Council on Africa regularly these past three years, I feel as if I have come mostly with bad tidings, including after my first big trip in 2003 to northern Uganda and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was profoundly shocked by what I saw and deeply pessimistic after leaving our humanitarian colleagues on the ground.

This time, we have a very positive message that two of the worst wars of our time, age and generation — the wars in eastern Congo and the war in northern Uganda — can be brought to an end. It is not often that we have that kind of historic opportunity, and we should not fail as we work together to bring an end to the haemorrhage of human life in the eastern Congo and to the enormous suffering, especially of children, in northern Uganda. Twenty thousand children were kidnapped in northern Uganda. That is unparalleled anywhere in the world.

Now, as we see that militias are giving up their arms in the eastern Congo and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is assembling at the assembly points in the southern Sudan, we need urgent action to stabilize the situation and we need a flexible way of responding. We want to give the Mayi Mayi soldiers, whom I saw giving up their arms, the $110 package and some tools to become carpenters or to resume work as farmers. That is not happening at the moment. The alternative could take effect, and they could go back to raping and pillaging the civilian population.

Hopefully, the 400 LRA fighters who have come to the assembly points will be joined by thousands of others, by our estimation, at the two assembly points in the southern Sudan. We would rather have them there, eating canned food, watching videos or doing whatever they wish, than going back to northern Uganda and starting the whole indiscriminate attack on the civilian population again. That would spare a lot of human suffering and save us a lot of money in terms of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The representative of the United States commented that there should now be a consistent recovery effort, to be included in the appeals for 2007. Indeed, the country teams are working very hard as we speak on a very ambitious programme covering the areas of recovery, reconstruction and the protection of civilians in eastern Congo and northern Uganda. That will be included in the 2007 appeal that the Secretary-General, with my assistance, will launch at the end of November from this very building.

I also agree with those who commented that we need more help to realize that programme. We often feel that we round up the usual suspects when we want to foot the bill for such historic reconstruction programmes. That usually involves a dozen donors, the same ones over and over again. There are five dozen viable economies in the world, and they should all contribute.

Many commented on reconciliation and peace, on the one hand, and justice and accountability, on the other. I think that Africa is a model for other continents in terms of reconciliation, being able to build bridges and looking to the future. Europeans, Middle Easterners and Asians can learn from that. What is a problem in Africa is that too often it has been forgive and forget, and there has not seemed to be much of an interest among political, military and economic elites

to put an end to impunity for serious violations of human rights, including rampant sexual abuse. What we are therefore striving for now is peace with justice. That can come in many ways in northern Uganda. I am sure that we will succeed in northern Uganda.

I was very heartened to hear that the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) himself has called for work to be done now to end the war, ensure the demobilization of soldiers and so forth and develop something that will satisfy national and international laws, including the Rome Statute, as well as the local need for reconciliation and the local interest in the use of traditional justice mechanisms. I think that the ICC indictments will not be a stumbling block, and that they can actually provide impetus for future progress towards peace in northern Uganda, which is now at hand.

The representative of Peru asked about the second round of elections and the chances of their being free, fair and secure. I think there are very good possibilities for that. I congratulate our colleagues in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for what they did in the first elections. I also wish to congratulate Bill Swing, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, for what he has done of late with many ambassadors in Kinshasa to reconcile the tensions between the two contenders in the second round of presidential elections. I feel very confident that we are now going to have good elections. I really hope, and we all pray, that the results of the elections will not lead to further tension.

But the marathon in the Congo has only been half run. The billions of dollars the international community has invested in MONUC must now be supplemented with future investments in peace, security and reconstruction. It was a very bad sign that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have now been told that they are likely to have less money for humanitarian work in 2007, and that many of their colleagues working in the area of development were given no promises of increased funding for 2007. That is a bad omen for our ability to finish the marathon.

The representative of Denmark, as well as the representatives of several other countries including Qatar, referred to Darfur. Let me just say the following in that regard. I fear that we will return many times to Darfur. We are growing increasingly desperate as humanitarian actors. Today we released $4.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for helicopters to try to reach groups with whom we have lost all contact by road. We will go in with those helicopters when there is a lull in the fighting, in an attempt to deliver food and exit quickly. That is a very crude life-saving measure, which in a way shows how great the desperation has become in our attempts to keep people alive.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is sending more staff to Darfur as we speak, in an effort to help NGOs stay. Non-governmental organizations are now all debating whether to leave. One non-governmental organization recently lost five out of seven of its vehicles to car-jacking and armed robbery by various armed groups, including rebels, Janjaweed militia and organized crime groups on the ground. If NGOs leave, it will be like pulling the plug. The result will be an end to humanitarian relief. Were the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to leave, the effect would be exactly the same. All who now have influence — African neighbours, Arab States, Islamic States, China and westerners — have to do what they can in the coming days to impress upon the Government, the rebels and everyone else the need to avoid a meltdown, which would be beyond description.

The Permanent Representative of Japan asked about the situation in southern Sudan. I was encouraged by what I saw there. But there is also the fear that the progress in southern Sudan will also be threatened by a possible collapse in Darfur. We must therefore endeavour to avoid having another conflict to deal with. With the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) now in assembly points rather than continuing to loot, pillage and attack, the situation has improved in southern south Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has been able to absorb several armed groups that were on the loose earlier. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) has brokered agreements between the SPLA and other local groups. In short, the situation is now so good that the security level was lowered from phase-IV to phase-III just a few weeks ago. Things in southern Sudan are going in the right direction, but they continue to be very fragile.

Several representatives mentioned the situation in the Southern African region, and in Zimbabwe in particular. In addition, the representative of Denmark asked about the present humanitarian situation. When I

visited last year, after the disastrous eviction campaign, Government officials showed me a number of houses under construction. I was promised that all those who had been evicted would end up in better housing than they had before. The fact of the matter is that 92,460 housing structures were destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina. That is our firm estimate based on Government information. Very few — some 3,325 houses — have been built, as opposed to the more than 90,000 structures that were demolished. Those new houses went to many people who had not been evicted. Indeed, those who were in bad housing before this operation are in even worse conditions today.

The Amnesty International report that just came out is, in the view of our colleagues on the ground, to the point. No inaccuracies were found. We ourselves have tried to construct housing for the evicted, and, altogether, some 1,400 temporary shelters were constructed. In general, it has been very difficult to do so, because there has not been any Government cooperation at all to make it happen. We have released $2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for housing for those in need.

The harvest will, thankfully, be better this year than last year in Zimbabwe. Better rains may be the best explanation for that. Still, 1 million people will be in need of food assistance. Social services are still declining, the economy is still declining, and vulnerability is greatly increasing. We need more funding for our appeal, which is badly underfunded in Zimbabwe, and we need diplomatic and other help to try to get out of a very vicious circle in Zimbabwe — a country that could easily feed itself and which is now in a very steep decline in terms of social indicators.

Finally, I acknowledge the wish expressed by the Ambassador of Tanzania that, next time, there be a greater review of the situation in southern Africa and in other parts of Africa. I am very grateful for the regular invitations of the Council to brief on these situations and I am always willing to come whenever the Council has time to hear from me and from my humanitarian colleagues.

The President: I thank Mr. Egeland for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5526

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5526th meeting

Friday, 15 September 2006, 1.35 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Biaboreh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-52444 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The provisional agenda for this meeting is before the Council in document S/Agenda/5526, which reads "The situation in Myanmar". Does any member of the Council wish to speak on the subject?

I give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (spoke in Chinese): I wish to emphasize the following points on the question of the inclusion in the agenda of the Security Council of an item concerning the situation in Myanmar.

First, we should objectively evaluate the relationship between the situation in Myanmar and international peace and security. According to the United Nations Charter, it is only those questions that constitute threats to international peace and security that warrant discussion by the Security Council. If the existence in Myanmar of such issues — including human rights questions, refugees, drugs and HIV/AIDS — means that they are likely to endanger international peace and security and thus makes it necessary to make one country the subject of an item on the Council's agenda, then it follows that any country facing similar issues should likewise be inscribed on the Council's agenda. That is preposterous.

In fact, neither the direct neighbours of Myanmar nor the overwhelming majority of Asian countries recognizes the situation in Myanmar as any threat to regional peace and security. Without seeking the consent of the country in question, and without a request from a country in the region, some countries so far away, across the ocean are, however, of the belief that the situation in Myanmar is indeed a threat to international peace and security. That is a far cry from reality, to say the least. To request that the Security Council discuss an issue that by nature pertains to the internal affairs of a country not only exceeds the mandate given by the Charter to the Council, but will also undermine the Council's authority and legality.

Secondly, we should recognize the efforts on the part of Myanmar to solve its own problems. There is no denying that in Myanmar there are many questions or problems, some of which are quite serious. However, all of the countries involved are faced with problems of some kind. The key is to find a constructive solution to the problems facing a country.

Recently, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Myanmar revised its domestic law so as to align it with the ILO conventions. On the basis of close consultations with its neighbours, Myanmar has set out to properly tackle its refugee problems.

The 2006 World Drug Report and the United States Government's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report both point to remarkable achievements on the part of Myanmar in combating drug production and trafficking. All of that indicates that the situation in Myanmar is gradually improving.

The international community should continue to encourage Myanmar and to create a favourable environment for the country. Only in that manner can real momentum be injected to accelerate the early completion of the democratic process so that Myanmar will participate in regional peace and development.

Thirdly, we should further promote communication and cooperation between Myanmar and the international community. In May 2006, Under-Secretary-General Gambari visited Myanmar upon invitation. The visit, during which he met with members both of the Government of Myanmar and of civil society, had successful results.

Following the visit, Under-Secretary-General Gambari also indicated that Myanmar was ready and willing to collaborate with the United Nations and turn over a new leaf. As we speak, the Government of Myanmar has once again extended an invitation to Under-Secretary-General Gambari, and a visit will likely take place in early November.

On 10 July, the Non-Aligned Movement wrote a letter to the Security Council in which it put forward its categorical opposition to the inclusion of the issue of Myanmar on the agenda of the Security Council and its request for constructive cooperation between the international community and Myanmar. In August, the Foreign Minister of the Philippines, as current Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), paid a successful visit to Myanmar, which served to boost ASEAN's confidence in finding a successful solution to the question of Myanmar on its own.

As a result of that series of exchanges, visits and communications, we now have favourable interaction between the international community and Myanmar and some hard-won gains. The international community should welcome and further encourage such momentum. Only in this way can it assist the Secretary-General in fulfilling the mandate of good offices entrusted to him by the General Assembly. To force the Security Council into intervening is not only inappropriate but will also further complicate the situation and have a negative impact on future interaction between Myanmar and the United Nations.

As a permanent member of the Security Council representing the Asia-Pacific region, and as an immediate neighbour of Myanmar, China wishes, more than any other country in the world, to see political stability, economic development and national unity in Myanmar. At the same time, China has all along adopted a responsible attitude in constructively assisting the Government of Myanmar in tackling its problems incrementally. We are of the view that events in Myanmar certainly relate to that country's internal affairs, and that it should therefore be left to the Government and the people of Myanmar to find a solution to the problem on the basis of consultations. It is incumbent upon the international community to lend a helping hand and play a positive and constructive role.

So long as the situation in Myanmar does not pose a threat to international or regional peace and security, China will be unequivocally against including the question of Myanmar on the agenda of the Security Council. China's position on this matter will remain unchanged.

Mr. Al-Qahtani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Qatar has always affirmed the importance of respect for the respective competences of the organs of the United Nations. The relevant organs, particularly the Human Rights Council, should be given priority in dealing with questions of human rights, including the question of Myanmar. It is well known that neither Myanmar's neighbours nor the regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) consider the human rights situation in Myanmar to constitute a threat to regional peace and security. Therefore, we must leave the door open for the Secretary-General and the regional organizations, as well as the competent United Nations organs, to deal with questions of human rights; they must be given priority in dealing with such matters.

What we fear is that, by including this question on the agenda of the Council, we would close the diplomatic channels opened by Myanmar with the competent international human rights institutions and with the Secretary-General. Therefore, we believe that including this matter on the agenda of the Security Council is inappropriate, and we object to it.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): In order that the record is clear on what we are doing here, I would just briefly like to make a few remarks, starting with the reading of the letters that we have sent to you, Mr. President, in your capacity as President of the Security Council, and that bring us to this important vote today.

The first letter, dated 1 September, addressed to you, Mr. President, states,

> "The United States and other members of the Security Council are concerned about the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, known to the United States as Burma, and this situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.
>
> "In his briefings to the Council in December 2005 and June 2006, Under-Secretary-General Gambari described the grave human rights and humanitarian conditions in Burma, including the detention of over 1,100 political prisoners, as well as the outflow from Burma of refugees, drugs, HIV-AIDS and other diseases. These conditions threaten to have a destabilizing impact on the region.
>
> "Therefore, we request that the situation in Myanmar, known to the United States as Burma, be placed on the Council's agenda, and that a senior official of the Secretariat formally brief Member States in a meeting of the Security Council on this situation and its implications for international peace and security".

The second letter, Mr. President, dated today, addressed to you in your capacity as President of the Council, states,

> "Further to my letter of 1 September 2006 on the subject of Myanmar, known to the United States as Burma, and to our subsequent

discussions with Council members, I would like to specifically confirm my request for a meeting of the Security Council during September, but after 19 September, under the agenda item 'The situation in Myanmar', for members of the Council to receive a briefing from Under-Secretary-General Gambari on the situation in that country and the status and progress of the Secretary-General's good offices mission. I would appreciate your circulating this letter as a document of the Security Council".

Since the passage of resolution 688 (1991) dealing with the refugee flows from Iraq after the first Persian Gulf war, matters of this kind have been deemed to be threats to international peace and security. And so it is with Burma. The vote that the Council is about to take is an important, albeit procedural, one. I urge that everyone on the Council support it.

The President: I wish to draw the attention of members to document S/2006/742, containing the text of a letter dated 15 September 2006 from the representative of the United States addressed to the President of the Council, which Ambassador Bolton just read out.

In view of the request that the matter be included in the provisional agenda and in view of the comments made by the representatives of China and Qatar, I propose to put the provisional agenda (S/Agenda/5526) to the vote. Accordingly, I shall put it to the vote now.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against:

China, Congo, Qatar, Russian Federation.

Abstaining:

United Republic of Tanzania.

The President: There were 10 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 1 abstention. The provisional agenda has been adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

Letter dated 15 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/742)

The President: Pursuant to the request of the representative of the United States contained in document S/2006/742 that the meeting of the Council on the agenda item "The situation in Myanmar" be convened after 19 September, I shall accordingly schedule such a meeting to continue consideration of this agenda item, following consultations with Council members.

There is no other business before the Council at this time.

The meeting was suspended at 1.50 p.m.

United Nations S PV.5526 (Resumed)

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 September 2006

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 5526th (resumed) (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 29 September 2006, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"At the resumption of the 5526th meeting, held in private on 29 September 2006, the Security Council considered the item entitled 'The situation in Myanmar'.

"The President, with the consent of the Council, invited the representative of Myanmar to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, the President, with the consent of the Council, extended an invitation under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Gambari and the representative of Myanmar had an exchange of views."

06-54555 (E) 021006

United Nations S/PV.5527

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 September 2006

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 5527th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 18 September 2006, at 9.35 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 18 September 2006, the Security Council, pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001), annex II, sections A and B, held its 5527th meeting in private with the troop-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan.

"A briefing was made pursuant to rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure by Mr. Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan."

06-52541 (E) 180906